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# Candidates' web site use during the 1996 presidential campaign

Carol Ann McKeown

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**CANDIDATES' WEB SITE USE DURING  
THE 1996 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications  
San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Science**

**by**

**Carol Ann McKeown**

**May, 1997**

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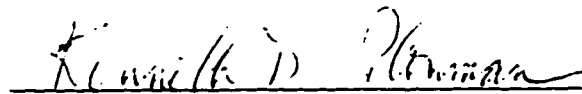
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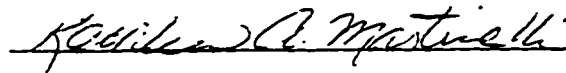
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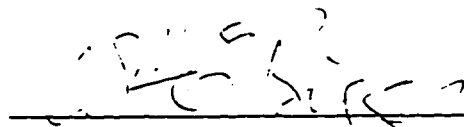
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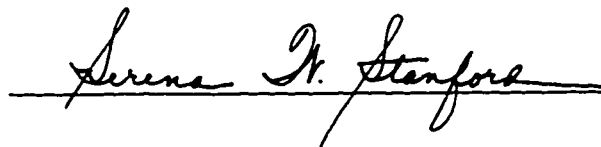
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CANDIDATES' WEB SITE USE DURING THE 1996 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN**

**By Carol Ann McKeown**

**This case study explored how the 1996 Democratic and Republican parties' presidential candidates used the World Wide Web to communicate to voters during the general election. It considered whether the campaigns were able to present more in-depth issue information through this new communication medium than traditional media channels. In addition, it examined whether campaigns used this new technology to increase the interaction between voters and candidates.**

**The method of research was the qualitative case study. Through focused interviews with campaign personnel, review of campaign documentation, and observation of the Web sites during the general election period, four stages of data analysis were used to increase reliability.**

**The study found that campaigns did use the World Wide Web to increase the amount of in-depth issue information available to voters. However, results also indicated that campaigns did not move beyond traditional methods of involving voters in campaigns.**



*for Rick*

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## Chapter I Introduction

Rapid advances in technology continue to have an impact on many aspects of our society. One area in which these advances are having an effect is communication technologies, specifically new media technologies. These changes affect how organizations reach their intended audiences by increasing the number of media available for communication. One emerging communication vehicle is the World Wide Web, which is made up of individual graphical publishing sites on the Internet. An advantage of these sites for the user is that their access does not require knowledge of complex programming languages or command structures, resulting in relatively easy access.

Although it is unknown how the World Wide Web may change modes of communication for organizations, this emerging technology continues to be a focus in the national media. Negroponte (1995) predicted that this is just the beginning of a radical change in how Americans access information. His prediction of a move away from a “push” distribution of information, in which organizations distribute information through mass media channels, to a “pull” distribution, in which individuals access only the information that interests them; relies on the existence of an active audience (J. Grunig, 1982). The World Wide Web is the first “pull” communication medium with both interactivity and graphical impact, and may be the start of the trend towards this change in communication predicted by Negroponte. It presents an opportunity for organizations to

experiment with this new approach to communication and to learn how to use it to reach their audiences.

### Purpose of Study

Specifically, this study hoped to answer the question, “How are presidential candidates using the World Wide Web to increase the level of interactivity between the candidate and voters?” Through an analysis of how this communication medium was used during the 1996 presidential election campaign, the researcher intended to show how candidates used this format to inform voters about their qualifications and issue positions. By comparing how candidates used this medium to Dozier, L. Gruning, and J. Grunig’s (1995) mixed motive model of public relations and Grunig’s (1982) situational theory, the researcher explored the question of how political candidates can use this new communication medium to involve voters in their respective campaigns.

There are too many different organizations that use the Web to communicate to their different audiences to research in one study. By limiting research to a single type of organization, the researcher can gain in-depth knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of a particular approach. This study specifically focused on how the 1996 Democrat and Republican parties’ presidential candidates used the World Wide Web for communication of their messages to voters. This is an important area to research for three reasons: (a) this is the first time candidates have used this medium to communicate to their voters; (b) presidential campaigns face a difficult communication task, since they must get their message out to a diverse collection of voters; (c) and the Web may provide a way to increase interactivity between voters and candidates. It was beyond the scope of this

study to consider how candidates used other media for message delivery during this time period.

### Applicable Research

Current research on existing technology has focused specifically on the effects of television on political campaigns (Joslyn, 1990; Kerbel, 1994; Mickelson, 1989; Rosenstiel, 1993). The literature in this area suggests that television news has created a mediated, entertainment climate for campaigns that does not address voters' needs for information about the candidates and the issues. By creating a spectator environment, voters are less likely to have a high level of involvement in the campaign, which results in low voter turnout (Popkin, 1994). Second, this study will draw from existing studies to define what information voters require to make their decision about the candidates (Dalton & Wattenberg, 1993; Graber, 1988; Popkin, 1994). By understanding what information voters are seeking, and how current communication media do not meet those needs, candidates can utilize this new medium as a way to address in-depth issues.

Finally, by building on two public relations theories, this study hoped to propose a way for presidential candidates to raise the level of involvement voters have in the campaign process. The first theory is J. Grunig's (1982) situational theory, which defined the information gathering process people use when making a decision about an issue. This theory defined four types of publics that react to a communication message: non-publics, latent publics, aware publics, and active publics. These publics were defined as having various responses to communication messages depending upon their involvement in the issue. Through the application of this theory, candidates can understand that voters who



are actively seeking information about candidates are accessing the Web sites, and that voters who perceive a level of personal involvement with the campaign are more likely to act on that information. Second, Dozier et al.'s (1995) mixed motive model of public relations demonstrated two different types of communications models that political campaigns can practice. These are the two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical models of public relations. The two-way asymmetrical model of communication was defined as using research and feedback from an audience to change behavior. In the two-way symmetrical model of communication, both the organization and the public communicate on an issue to reach a compromise approach. By combining these two models into the mixed motive model, Dozier et al. proposed that practitioners needed to combine these models to reach an equilibrium between an organization and its publics. While campaigns traditionally use the two-way asymmetrical model of communications, when they incorporate the two-way symmetrical model they can achieve more of what they want by meeting voters' need for information.

### Overview of Methods

The qualitative case study was the method chosen for this research. Through this qualitative method, the researcher was able to explore in-depth how the 1996 Republican and Democratic presidential campaigns used this new communication medium (Yin, 1994). The case study method was chosen because it afforded the researcher an opportunity to review the data from several different angles. Second, it provided a framework for analysis through pattern-matching across different data collected during the

research period. This triangulation of data by comparing four different data types in an in-depth analysis enhanced reliability of the study.

Using this qualitative case study method, this research analyzed the intent of the communications between the candidates and the voters on Web sites for both the 1996 Democratic and Republican candidates for president. Data collected included interviews with appropriate campaign staff involved in the set-up and maintenance of each Web site. These interviews took place before the parties' conventions, and additional follow-up interviews were conducted after election day. Documentation from each campaign, including, but not limited to, the original proposal for each Web site, were used as corroboration for the interviews. Direct observation of each Web site during the campaign was analyzed for latent content concerning the interactivity initiated between the campaigns and voters. Finally, print journalism stories on the Web site were gathered during the research time period to analyze an outside perception of each site.

#### Contribution to the Field

This study advanced the body of knowledge in public relations by combining Grunig's (1982) situational theory and Dozier et al.'s (1995) mixed motive model of public relations in an application of a new medium for political communication. Since this was a qualitative study, the results are not statistically generalizable (Yin, 1994). It does however, provide a broader theoretical framework for future political campaigns to understand possible uses of the World Wide Web. By understanding the limitations of current media technology in the political campaign process, this research developed a normative theory to aid in understanding how to increase voter involvement in the

campaigns, perhaps resulting in higher voter turnout. Although the number of people currently accessing Web sites is small, this audience will continue to grow. By understanding how this medium can help overcome existing problems in communication technology, candidates can raise voter involvement and aid in increasing voters' perception that their vote does have an effect.

## Chapter II Literature Review

New media technologies continually have an effect on how political communication is practiced. Television and new personal media technologies have allowed candidates to communicate directly with their publics. The newest medium, the World Wide Web, may have additional impact on the 1996 presidential campaign. Reviewing what effects television has had on traditional presidential campaigns, shows how this new technology should be applied by the campaigns.

By understanding how voters make decisions and what information they use to make voting choices, candidates gain insight into the use of the World Wide Web for communication (Bennett, 1992; Graber, 1988; J. Grunig, 1982; Klapp, 1978; Popkin, 1994). In addition, by understanding what types of communication between organizations and their publics are effective, candidates can use this new communication medium in a way that encourages publics to vote.

### Background of Study

Television. With the advent of new technologies, political campaigns have changed how they reach their publics. The introduction of television as a mass medium in the 1950s allowed presidential candidates to reach their publics directly instead of communicating through established channels of local party members (Kerbel, 1994; Marshall, 1983). Television allowed presidential candidates to reach the nation without traveling. Through political advertisements and the evening news, candidates could speak

directly to their publics. Although their messages had to go through the filter of the media, or fit into the format of a sixty-, thirty- or fifteen-second commercial, the opportunity to get the message out was expanded.

Personal media technologies. In the 1990s, media technology continues to change. The explosion of personal media, which allow the individual to control the flow of information, has had significant impact in government-controlled media societies (Ganley, 1992). The introduction of copiers, fax machines, video cassette recorders, and personal computers shifted communication of a message from large institutions, such as governments or corporations, to individuals. These technologies have also had an effect in the United States. Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign successfully used these technologies to quickly respond to attacks during the Republican National Convention by faxing response documents to Convention press sites (Myers, 1993).

World Wide Web. The newest media technology is the World Wide Web. The ability for individuals to connect to other computers and other individuals, ignoring distance, has created an opportunity for individuals to interact outside their local community. This expansion of the local community to a global community through the use of the personal computer has the potential of having great impact on national elections. Just as television's impact was unknown before it was widely adopted as the primary news source for most Americans, the effects of the World Wide Web are still unknown.

The World Wide Web was first used for political campaigns in 1994 (Carl, 1995). Carl critiqued former New York Governor Mario Cuomo's 1994 home page. Noting that

a strong presence on the Web does not guarantee victory, Carl discussed why Cuomo's page was nonetheless effective. Using hyperlinked categories, Cuomo broke down issues into specific categories. In addition, Cuomo's page featured a map of the state of New York which "allowed visitors to click on a particular region or city and receive a detailed summary of Cuomo's work in that area" (Carl, p. 57).

Although voters' use of the World Wide Web to gather information for voting decisions is difficult to track, candidates who want to communicate to this audience have an inexpensive and interactive way to do so on the Web. Browning (1995) stated that the audience on the Web is the one candidates want to reach: affluent, younger voters who are vitally interested in politics. He described the audience on the World Wide Web as "the voters that anyone planning to hit the campaign trail . . . wants to attract" (Browning, 1995, p. 794). Rubel (1995) stated that "the Web sites are geared towards new and younger voters who are less likely to receive their information from newspapers, TV and radio" (p. 6). The Web audience appears to be the one candidates are interested in reaching; people who do not use traditional media for campaign information.

For the 1996 presidential campaign, the Web offered candidates a new tool for reaching voters. Betts (1995) stated that the World Wide Web is "fast becoming a new weapon for politicians as well as a battleground for next year's elections" (p. 1). Holdren (1995) noted that in the 1992 presidential elections, voters looked for information unfiltered by the traditional mass media. Using examples of Jerry Brown's 800- number and Ross Perot's grass-roots campaign techniques, as well as jammed phone lines during talk shows featuring presidential candidates, Holdren demonstrated that voters searched

for new ways to learn about candidates. She defined four areas where the World Wide Web excels as a media for political campaigns. First is the low cost of entry into the media, as opposed to television advertising. Second, costs associated with the Web do not increase with the number of people reached. Third, the format is interactive, so candidates can involve voters in the process. Fourth, natural communities of interest about campaigns already exist on the Web. Additional advantages for candidates in setting up Web sites are: an interactive campaign headquarters that can be accessed anytime by anyone with a modem (Coates, 1995); an inexpensive, direct way to engage in two-way communication with voters (Powers, 1994); and television-like graphics at a fraction of the cost (Browning, 1995). Diamond and Geller (1995) stated that costs for a 30-second spot in a major television market can cost up to \$50,000; for the same amount of money a candidate can hire a contractor to build a Web site for a whole year.

It is currently the independent and minority parties that take the most advantage of the power of the Web sites. Carl (1995) discussed a libertarian candidate who used his Web page to respond to mainstream media sources: "This sort of quick and free response is an excellent example of Web use by a candidate with too little funding to challenge the mass media in the mass media" (p. 57).

Although the World Wide Web appears to be an ideal format for presidential candidates, there are disadvantages. Balz (1995) noted that the disadvantages include: slow transmission time for extensive graphics, and a candidate's ability to structure the information to benefit his message. Using this new format is charting unknown territory in communications. The result, as Carl (1995) stated, is that currently most Web pages are

only “glorified campaign brochures” (p. 56), and do not take advantage of this new medium.

How can candidates use the World Wide Web to their best advantage? To fully understand this issue, it is necessary to look at several areas of research. These are the effects literature on existing technologies, such as television; how voters use information to make their voting decisions; and the concept of two-way communication.

### Technology Issues In Campaign Coverage

Television. Those who research the effects of television on political campaigns have focused on several issues. Operating under economic constraints to show a profit, television news stations battle between ratings and responsible news coverage (Rosenstiel, 1993). This entertainment aspect of television converts elections into horse races (Kerbel, 1994; Marshall, 1983; Mickelson, 1989), and results in reporters covering the “why” aspect of a story, instead of the “what” aspect (Robinson & Sheehan, 1983; Rosenstiel, 1993).

Kerbel (1994), in his case study of the television coverage of the 1992 elections, identified five news media themes: horse race coverage, issue coverage, process coverage, image coverage, and nonissue coverage. He discovered that in 1992 there was a departure from the traditional horse race coverage. He attributed this to two reasons: a primary field composed of relative unknowns and polls showing that economic issues were at the forefront of voters’ minds.

Kerbel (1994) argued that the problem with television is that its primary purpose is to entertain, not inform. He noted that “viewers are not engaged in the political process as



much as they are observers of it" (p. 211). Mickelson (1989) supported Kerbel's conclusions, citing the horse race aspect of coverage and television as entertainment as reason for viewers' inactivity in the political process.

Robinson and Sheehan's (1983) case study of coverage of Jimmy Carter's campaign day in Philadelphia illustrated the difference between traditional print media and contemporary network news. It demonstrated that TV news coverage focused more on the "why" or "how" of Carter's day, while traditional print media focused more on the "what" of Carter's day. They defined network content as being more "reactive, thematic, personal, political, critical, analytical, mediating in campaign coverage than is print news" (Robinson & Sheehan, 1983, p. 27).

Rosenstiel's (1993) case study of ABC World News Tonight's 1992 election coverage supported Robinson and Sheehan's (1983) conclusion. By focusing on the "why" aspect, he argued, the reporters emphasized the planning and decision aspects of the campaign, as opposed to what candidates were actually doing. This results in more cynical coverage of candidates, which Rosenstiel concluded has harmed the political process. Kerbel (1994) also noted the cynical coverage of politics by the media. He predicted that the next role for television would be an increase in candidates circumventing the press by appearing on talk shows and talking directly to voters.

Joslyn (1990) supported Rosentiel's conclusions in his discussion of how campaign news coverage prevents voters from learning about the political issues. He cited examples of horse race coverage, campaign issues coverage, negative coverage of both the electoral process and the motives of participants to demonstrate how voters do not have an

opportunity to learn about the issues in a campaign. He concluded that campaign news is abundant, but not in-depth.

Dover (1994) concluded that the “presence of television can enhance the strengths of some incumbents while enhancing the weaknesses of others” (p. 171). He compared the reporting patterns of television news as consolidating a candidate’s power, to the system of the electoral college. By portraying the election process as a horse race, television news results in covering the winning candidates more than the losing ones. This results in one candidate consolidating power early on in the primary process.

Effects of technology on campaigns. The effects of technology on presidential campaigns are twofold: a contribution to the decline of the power of political parties; and instantaneous coverage. Some researchers claimed that television was the cause of the decline of the party system, while others stated that this was a by-product resulting from other campaign reforms. Marshall (1983) stated that media’s increased impact “has been an unintended byproduct of recent reforms: party rules changes, increasing numbers of primaries and openly contested caucuses, and new fund-raising and spending regulations” (p. 64). Kerbel (1994) argued that the decline of political parties was caused by the twin trends of primaries becoming the ground for choosing party candidates and the resulting increase of impact that television had on this process.

Benjamin (1982) cited the changes in technology as hastening the decline in power of the political parties, as candidates have more avenues to reach the voters directly. He calls this process “disintermediation and nationalization (or at least delocalization) of

American politics” (p. 4). Gronbeck (1990) described current presidential elections as reaching voters directly with direct mail campaigns for funding and message delivery.

Another effect of technology was the increased speed at which coverage of events could be aired. Leaving little time for reflection, television news not only shows the event, but also analyzes it live. Rosenstiel (1993) noted that technology lowered the standards of journalism. He observed that television coverage of the national conventions allowed no time for planning. The available technology made it possible to have instantaneous coverage, allowing little time for reflection. Linsky (1983) and Gronbeck (1990) also discussed the problems of live coverage creating a media-made reality because of time constraints. Diamond, McKay, and Silverman (1993) noted that “all media transactions involve some sort of trade-off between news maker and news reporter” (p. 257). They stated that this resulted in coverage that was immediate. Adams (1983) pointed out that the 1980 campaign was the first time that journalists acknowledged that the media had an effect on elections, and carried stories on that particular issue. The purpose of this coverage, Adams (1983) stated, was to bring changes or improvements to the process.

During the most recent presidential election, candidates used new technologies to aid in disseminating their message. Myers (1993) outlined five tactical and strategic goals for new media technologies used by the 1992 Clinton campaign. These were (a) rapid response to any attack by opponents; (b) use of specific news outlets to reach targeted voters; (c) use of interactive satellite, telephone, and computer communications to have Clinton appear electronically; (d) communicate a complete picture of the candidate by

utilizing longer format media; and (e) a combination of new technologies and surrogate speakers.

These researchers identified where television and technology produce mediated coverage that focus on the entertainment, horse-race aspect of campaigns, without time for adequate or knowledgeable analysis. In addition, candidates have gained more control of their messages by avoiding traditional party communications channels and reaching their audiences directly.

The results of increased technology in mass media communications has been an acceleration of the transition from event to news, leaving little time for reflection. In addition, television news' focus on entertainment left voters without the information they felt they needed to make decisions about the candidates (Kerbel, 1994). This resulted in the trend during the 1992 presidential elections of voters looking for new ways to interact with candidates, such as call-in talk shows and town hall meetings.

### The Reasoning Voter Model

Low information rationality. Popkin (1994) proposed a reasoning voter theory that suggested that voters use low-information rationality to make decisions about political candidates. Popkin defined a "by-product theory of political information: the information that people acquire to negotiate their daily lives is later applied to their political judgments and choices" (p. 22). This theory is similar to theories discussing how people process incoming information in all areas of life, not just during political campaigns.

Klapp (1978) discussed the problems of information overload in society, and how people cope and process the amount of incoming data. He defined a theory of opening

and closing, through which each person controls the flow of new information at a level that is comfortable to process. He discussed the incongruity of political mailings which present the feeling of responsiveness to constituents, yet fails to deliver a sincere message of involvement. It is these types of messages, he claimed, that voters close themselves to, because they do not fit within the expected mode of communication.

Graber's (1988) schema theory demonstrated how people manage the flow of information by constructing categories in which to fit new information. She discussed how these schema aid in deciding what information is noticed and the way it is organized. Schemas also allow people to go beyond the current input of information, and solve problems by fitting issues into past events. Graber claimed that these categories or schemas allow people to quickly interpret incoming information.

These theories help us understand what criteria voters use in making voting decisions. By fitting new information into existing schemas, and remaining closed to information that does not fit into past experiences, voters process the ongoing flow of political information. By using existing schema of (a) understanding how government is performing, (b) economic issues, (c) family and consumer issues, and (d) long term issues, voters are able to process the amount of complex information available. Through this information shortcut, voters are able to make decisions about candidates.

Voter involvement. Popkin (1994) argued that television does not focus enough on the substance of campaign coalition building. It is this act of coalition building that aids voters in visualizing themselves as key players in the election, which encourages them to vote. Popkin questioned whether electronic coalition building can actually substitute

for the live acts of rallies, parades, etc. Citing Clinton's performance in the 1992 election, Popkin equated his appearances on talk shows and such programs as the *Arsenio Hall Show* and MTV's *Rock the Vote* as an electronic alternative to the live acts of rallies and planned events. By appearing on the shows that voters watched, Clinton was able to inform voters about his plan for the economy in more than the nine-second soundbites allowed by the national news. Popkin called campaigns important because they bring information to the voters in a culturally, economically, and socially diverse society. Popkin stated, "(Campaigns should) offer them (voters) . . . cues and signals that connect their world with the world of politics" (p. 236).

Spectator roles. Bennett (1992) blamed our contemporary political decline on the media, which relegates voters to spectator roles only. He supported Popkin's (1994) assertion that voters need to be involved in the process to successfully participate. He cited historical examples to show that spectacles have always been a part of political campaigns in our country. Bennett identified three characteristics of current media political spectacles that contribute to isolation of the voter: focus on the individual candidates and the psychological needs of the voter; news that invites personal projection as the result of the influence of market research; and a breakdown in the institutions that connect elected officials with voters.

Interest in personal qualities. Graber (1988) noted that most people are interested in candidates' personal qualities. Although they may say they are interested in the issues, her study indicated that people actually focus on personal qualities in candidates. Graber pointed out that study participants, although complaining about oversimplification of the

news, did not seek out available opportunities for more extensive issue discussions: “our study seems to indicate that social forces within a particular cultural environment determine to what use people will put the media” (Graber, 1988, p. 128). Graber found that when the “news failed to provide anticipated or alternative gratifications, our panelists stopped paying attention” (p. 129). She pointed out that this showed that gratifications are an important force for using the media to gain information. As the above studies illustrate, research in the area of what information voters use to make their voting decisions demonstrates that voters seek out many different types of information to make their voting decisions.

#### Campaign Communication Techniques

How should presidential candidates communicate to their voters? Through understanding that voters require many different types of information to make their decision and by combining two public relations theories: Grunig's (1982) situational theory and the Dozier et al.'s (1995) mixed motive model of public relations with traditional campaign communication techniques, candidates can better understand who is accessing their Web site, as well as what information to include and how to present it with new media technologies such as the World Wide Web.

Situational theory. The situational theory of publics was developed by J. Grunig (1982) to explain how people react differently to communication messages depending on their involvement with a particular issue. The theory defined three characteristics that affect how publics react to issues: problem recognition, involvement, and constraint recognition. Problem recognition is defined as a public's understanding of uncertainty

about an event. For example, if a political campaign is characterized as “too close to call” by the press, voters would know that the outcome was uncertain. Involvement is defined as the public’s cognitive perception of an issue (Grunig & Repper, 1992). Involvement is the perception of personal connection to an event. For an individual to feel involvement in an event, the outcome of an event must be perceived to relate directly to that individual’s life. Finally, constraint recognition is defined as the belief that an individual’s actions will have no effect on the outcome of a specific event. In a political campaign, if voters perceive that their vote will have no effect on the decision, they have high constraint recognition.

These characteristics also influence a number of dependent variables concerning the public’s actions: information-seeking, message processing and retention, attitude formation, and behavioral responses. From these characteristics and variables, Grunig (1982) defined three types of publics: (a) latent publics, those who are low in problem recognition and involvement; (b) aware publics, those who are high in problem recognition, but vary on involvement and constraint recognition; and (c) active publics, those who are high in problem recognition and involvement, and low in constraint recognition. In 1984, J. Grunig and Hunt added a fourth public, non-publics. Non-publics were characterized as having low involvement and high constraint recognition. These publics were defined as having no interest in the issue.

Political communicators target specific groups as audiences for campaigns. First, campaigns identify who voted in the last election, and therefore are likely to go to the polls. Second, campaigns target within this group voters who already support the



candidate, and the group of voters who are undecided (Bradshaw, 1995; Schwartzman, 1989; Sweeney, 1995). Campaigns do not target their messages to voters already committed to voting for the opposition, as this is perceived as a waste of resources. Presidential candidates take this one step further, due to the effects of the electoral college (Wiley, 1984). Candidates focus on the states with the largest number of electoral votes, and those states that polling indicates are close or undecided. By targeting the voters in these swing states, candidates can best utilize their limited amount of funds.

Under the situational theory, both committed and undecided voters who voted in the last election may be either aware or active publics. From the candidate's perspective, it is important to motivate decided aware voters into active voters by going to the polls. Undecided voters, defined as aware voters by the situational theory, must develop higher levels of involvement in the outcome of the election to become motivated to vote. However, in addition to raising undecided voters' level of involvement, candidates must also persuade these voters that they are the right choice. Campaigns try to achieve this end by differentiating themselves from their competition through their campaign message, and engaging in get out the vote activities (Salmore & Salmore, 1989; Schwartzman, 1989; Wiley, 1984).

Understanding the situational theory and campaign techniques is important in helping candidates identify who might be accessing their Web pages. As defined earlier, the Web is a "pull" communication, and requires action by a voter for access. According to the situational theory, latent publics who have low involvement with the issues will not be visitors. Aware publics who are high in problem recognition may access the page for

more information depending on their involvement in the issues and their constraint recognition. Active publics who are high in problem recognition and involvement are most likely to seek out candidates' Web pages. They are actively seeking information about candidates, and feel that actions they take can make a difference. Candidates should not, however, overlook the portion of the audience that is aware, with low constraint recognition and high involvement. These publics are likely to be aware of the issues, but may still be undecided voters. They comprise a critical portion of the voting population that candidates want to reach. In understanding situational theory, combined with traditional campaign techniques, it can be predicted that visitors to Web sites will be audiences that campaigns will want to communicate to: active and aware voters who may or may not have made voting decisions.

Popkin's (1994) and Bennett's (1992) criticisms of the existing political campaign system because of its low voter involvement, builds on J. Grunig's (1982) theory of information processing. Since voters who feel a high level of involvement in the campaign are more likely to seek information on an issue, it is critical for candidates to involve voters in the campaign. By demonstrating how campaigns affect voters' lives at an individual level, and involving voters interactively, campaign communicators can turn aware publics into active publics.

Understanding who is accessing the Web site, however, is only a part of the picture. In addition, candidates must also consider how to present their information to help aid voters in making their decisions about a candidate. Popkin's (1994) claim, that interactivity with candidates raises voters' connection to the election process and

motivates them to vote, suggests that two models of public relations may provide an answer.

The models of public relations. In 1984, J. Grunig and Hunt defined four models of public relations, drawing on how public relations was practiced currently and historically. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) further explored the models to define a normative theory of how public relations should be practiced. Two of the defined models, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical, are applicable for communication issues confronting presidential candidates.

Two-way asymmetrical model. The two-way asymmetrical model of communications involves both research and feedback from an audience. Research in this model can occur before the communication takes place; to help determine what the communication should be. It can also take place after the fact, serving the purpose of evaluating the success of the communication. Yet the intention of the communication is persuasion only, thus the effects are unbalanced. By first researching what audience attitudes about a particular issue are, the public relations practitioner then targets the message to influence that attitude. Using the concept of scientific persuasion, this type of communication attempts to change behavior (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

This model of communications is used extensively in political campaigns through research and polling. Campaigns rely heavily on research to decide whether to enter a race, to understand what groups to appeal to, and which themes to use (Salmore & Salmore, 1989; Schwartzman, 1989). By doing so, successful candidates “move and

motivate voters, (by) start(ing) where they are, not where you are” (Bradshaw, 1995, p. 45).

Two-way symmetrical model. In addition, J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) posited the concept of two-way symmetrical communication. J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) further developed this model by suggesting it is the only ethical approach to public relations. In this approach, both the organization and the public communicate on an issue, and a compromise approach is reached. The concepts of win-win negotiations and game theory are used in this model, where both sides feel that they have won on some issues and reached a fair compromise on others. Research indicates that when both sides are involved in issue resolution, involvement in the decision process alone gains support from the publics (Heath & Douglas, 1990). Understanding the process involved in the action, and gaining a sense of involvement in the issue help people work collectively to solve the problem. The understanding of why the decisions were made, as well as being a participant in that decision process, are the keys to successful resolution of particular issues or problems.

Mixed motives. Dozier et al. (1995) proposed that for excellent communication, practitioners need to use both the asymmetrical and symmetrical models of public relations. Symmetrical communication, they argued, “provides a framework for ethical communication practices” (p. 47). Yet asymmetrical communication practices played an important role in the research they did on excellent communication departments. Dozier et al. (1995) concluded that excellent communicators do try to convince publics that their organization holds the correct view on an issue. This leads to the mixed motive model of

public relations, in which both two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical practices are used to achieve an equilibrium between the desired outcomes of both the organization and its publics.

Political applications. Researchers in political communication theory characterize it as a negotiation process. Gronbeck (1990) described political communication as arenas of confrontation between symbols created by the candidates and symbols believed by the voters. Politics, therefore, is a continuous process of negotiation. Stuckey (1989) states, “the higher the office in question, the more the candidate will focus on image and symbolic appeals, and the less he will focus on substantive policy” (p. 1). Diamond et al. (1993) stated that the optimists’ view of the 1992 campaign was that “the public became a part of the process, an active participant” (p. 259). As voters become involved in the process of the election, and connected to the symbols that candidates use to describe America, they move from aware publics to active publics. In doing so, they raise their level of involvement and lower constraint recognition, a process which leads to the actual act of voting. However, campaigns traditionally use the two-way asymmetric communication model to get their message to the voters. By changing their mode of communication to the mixed motive model, they are more likely to involve voters in the process, thus lessening their constraint recognition. Traditional ways for candidates to bring decided voters in campaigns include volunteering and fundraising activities. For campaigns to motivate and shift undecided voters, candidates may need to use other techniques such as political rallies and direct interaction to raise levels of involvement.

### Summary and Research Questions

Television and technology. The existing literature on the effects of television and technology on presidential campaigns indicates some of the medium's inabilities to meet voters' needs for information. With television's main focus on the horse-race and entertainment aspects of the campaign, voters may not gain the critical issue information they need to make voting decisions. In addition, television has built a wall between the candidates and their audiences. There is less direct interaction between the two, perhaps resulting in lower voter turnouts. Finally the pace of coverage is so fast, that there is little time for effective analysis.

There was significant shift in this trend, however, during the 1992 election campaign. Candidates appeared in softer news formats and talk shows to encourage direct voter interaction. Although some researchers argued that this was not the only cause, there was an increase in voter turnout for this election. By increasing interactivity with voters and using longer formats to communicate in-depth plans, Clinton was able to motivate more voters to go to the polls and vote for him. This leads to the first research question:

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news?

The reasoning voter model. Expectations of fully informed voters on every issue that confronts the federal government is an unrealistic view of voters. The time involved in learning about the complicated issues and deciding which candidates support which issues is more than most voters feel is worth their time. Voters care about issues that they

perceive will affect them directly. In addition, they have a long-term view of what is best for the country. All of this information is integrated through the personal application of issues to a voter's own life.

In addition, voters need to feel that their vote matters. J. Grunig's (1982) situational theory demonstrated that lowering constraint recognition and raising involvement of voters raises the likelihood that voters will actually go to the polls. To create this sense of importance in each individual voter requires some kind of interactivity between the voter and either the candidate or the process of electing a president. Popkin (1994) questioned whether mediated interactivity was enough. He proposed that campaign events such as rallies and parades give voters a chance to make the leap from being involved in the issues to actually going out to vote. He felt that this direct personal involvement was necessary.

If Graber (1988) is right, however, voters are not as interested in complicated issues, as they are in the personality behind the candidates. As in day-to-day life, voters judge friends, job applicants, and neighbors by gut reactions to personal interaction. Voters feel that they can judge political candidates' characters by the same method. Thus, it is important for candidates to allow voters to become acquainted with them apart from their stances on issues.

Current research shows that voters look for many different types of information when making decisions about candidates. This leads to a second research question for this study:

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters?

Two-way communication. Finally, Dozier et al.'s (1995) combined two-way asymmetrical and symmetrical communications, the mixed motive model, presents a way for candidates to interact with their audiences. Researching what voters perceive as issues during the campaign and using that information to present a clear plan, is a first step for clearer communications. Involving voters in how to resolve particular issues will aid candidates by investing a sense of ownership in voters. By being a part of the process voters are more likely to vote, a crucial element for candidates. By understanding that involvement and low constraint recognition helps get voters to the polls to actually vote, candidates can use their Web sites as a way to involve voters and personally connect them to the campaign. This leads to the third research question:

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters?

Research focus. The reviewed literature suggests that presidential candidates need to increase personal involvement of voters in campaigns. Television has distanced the candidates from the voters, with the result of voters becoming aware, and not active, publics. The increase of interactivity between candidates and voters may aid in making voters be active, as opposed to only aware, publics. Yet how the interactivity is practiced is important. Dozier et al.'s (1995) mixed motive model of public relations defined a way for effective communications between an organization and its publics. By understanding



what voters want, and allowing two-way communication between voters and candidates, candidates can achieve more of what they want: voters at the polls voting for them.

The World Wide Web provides an opportunity for candidates to increase direct contact with voters, using the theories described above. By researching how the 1996 Republican and Democratic presidential candidates used this important new tool in communicating to voters, insight can be gained into the political communication process as a whole.

## Chapter III Method

### The Case Study Method

The research method used for this study was the qualitative case study. Case studies provide a framework within which to understand data collected during qualitative research. In addition, case studies have unique strengths in that they require triangulation between multiple data sources, allow for the analysis of current events, and are excellent in answering “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 1994).

The case study method is well suited for the investigation of how the 1996 Republican and Democratic presidential candidates used Web sites to communicate to their audiences for three reasons: it is a contemporary event, the research question is a “how” question, and the researcher has no control over the event itself. Yin (1994) stated that case studies are preferable when examining contemporary events over which the investigator has no control. This is because a case study allows a researcher to investigate an event as it is happening, as opposed to a historical review of data. For these reasons, the method chosen for this research is the case study.

### Sources of Data

To improve the reliability of this study, an embedded, double case study was done. The research observed two different approaches of presidential campaign Web sites: the 1996 Dole/Kemp Web site and the 1996 Clinton/Gore Web site. The research was embedded because four different types of data were collected within each separate unit of

analysis. The data collected included in-depth interviews with each candidates' staff person responsible for the Web site, documentation of original proposals or summaries detailing the purpose or success of the Web site, a daily download of the Web site itself, and review of print news stories concerning the content of the site.

The four different types of data were divided into two categories, data that came from sources within the campaign and data that were collected independent of the campaigns. Data that were collected from the campaigns included two sets of interviews with the campaign staffer responsible for the Web site and documentation created by the campaign concerning the sites. Independent data collection included daily observations for each of the campaigns' Web sites, and analysis of stories from both traditional and on-line print media during the research period concerning content of the sites.

### Data Collection

Interviews. The first type of data collection was focused interviews with each candidate's Web managers to understand what type of communication was intended. The researcher contacted each campaign and identified the person who was responsible for the Web site. Initial interviews took place in late June 1996, before either campaign had its general election site available to the public. While the Dole/Kemp campaign did have a site up and running during the primary period, the researcher learned at the first interview with Jeff Meyers, director of information systems, that the campaign was developing a new site for the general election. While Meyers worked on the primary site, he did not work on the general election site. This interview took place in person at the Dole/Kemp headquarters, lasted for approximately an hour and a half, and was not tape recorded.

Extensive notes were taken and transcribed that evening. The Dole/Kemp campaign Web site for the general election was unveiled on August 2, 1996.

The Clinton/Gore campaign did not have a Web site available to the public during the primary period. The initial interview was conducted with Adam Sohn, the director of technology for the campaign. The in-person interview at the Clinton/Gore campaign headquarters took approximately an hour, was tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. The Clinton/Gore site was announced on July 10, 1996 at a press conference with Vice President Al Gore.

The second round of focused interviews took place in mid-November after the campaign had ended. Robert Arena, director of internet strategy for the Dole/Kemp campaign, was interviewed by phone for approximately an hour and a half. The interview was tape recorded and transcribed at a later date. Adam Sohn, for the Clinton/Gore campaign, was also interviewed by phone in a tape recorded interview for about an hour.

The first interviews helped define the typology used for observations during the general election period. The questions were designed to understand what the campaigns viewed as important to communicating to the voters. The second round of interviews revisited the campaigns' goals and objectives for the site. It was also used as an opportunity to understand events observed on the site during the course of the campaign. The interview protocols are listed in the Appendix.

Another purpose of doing two interviews, one at the beginning of the general election period and one at the end, was to capture any changes in strategy that might have occurred during the ten-week period that was studied. This did not appear to happen.

While content was updated and changed on the site, there did not appear to be any shift in overall strategy.

All three participants stated that the Web site content was decided by committees generally consisting of staff personal representing communications, campaign strategy, finance, legal, the site designers, and themselves. Each participant was responsible for the site as well as various other technical duties for the campaign. As Sohn stated, “everyone is wearing seven hats around here.” Arena defined his major responsibility as an overview of the Web site, including deciding content, but stated, “I also had other jobs within the campaign.”

Campaign documentation. To improve understanding and increase the reliability of each campaign’s intent, the researcher also collected documentation to provide additional insight and confirmation of the perceived purpose of the communication presented on the Web site. Original documents can increase the reliability of the research by supporting statements made during the interviews. Specifically, each campaign was requested to provide any original proposals concerning the design and content of the sites. If final summaries of the Web sites were produced at the end of the campaign, these would be analyzed as well.

The Dole/Kemp campaign provided an in-depth proposal written by Robert Arena detailing what should be included on the site. This proposal was released to the researcher after the campaign had ended. The Clinton/Gore campaign did not produce a formal written proposal for the site. Three memos were released detailing the process for determining who would be hired to design the site, as well as hosting issues. One memo

concerning content was also released. These documents were released at the initial interview in June. Although Sohn stated that he was working on a summary at the end of campaign, the researcher was unable to obtain a copy of it.

Observation of Web sites. The first method of independent data collection was daily observation of the actual Web sites during the general election period. This data collection provided an independent confirmation of whether the campaigns actually implemented what the interviews and documentation suggested. Each site was analyzed according to the predicted patterns developed during the first interviews and predictions by the researcher.

The daily observation of the sites was initiated by a full download of both the sites on the first day of the research time period. The sites were accessed with a 486 computer running a Windows 95 operating system with a 28.8 kbps modem connection through an internet service provider. The browser used was Netscape Navigator 3.0 with the following plug-ins: RealAudio, QuickTime video and Shockwave. The download consisted of going to each page within the site and printing it out to a black and white laser printer.

After the initial print out of the sites, the researcher went back to the sites on a daily basis and printed out only the pages that contained new information. This was done on a daily basis, Monday through Friday, and sometimes on the weekends as well. At the end of the research period, the researcher again did a full print out of both sites. Due to the enormous amount of archival material contained on the sites, the pages showing what

press releases, speeches and other material updated frequently were printed out, but not the actual documents themselves.

These print outs were filed by date and analyzed both during the research period to aid in conducting the final interviews with the campaigns, as well as following all data collection.

Traditional and on-line print media. The second set of independent data collected was stories on the campaigns' Web sites in both traditional and on-line print media. Traditional print media stories collected included: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The San Jose Mercury News*. On-line publications stories included, *Wired*, *Hotwired*, *Salon*, *Slate*, and *C/Net*. Most of these publications ran only one, or at most, two stories about the sites during the general election period, and the stories reviewed all political Web sites, not just the campaign Web sites (Rosoff, 1996; Weber, 1996). Often the sites were mentioned only as brochures for the campaign (Cooper, 1996). Sohn stated, "the mainstream media did a lot of ho-hum on this . . . the Web media certainly did." While both the campaigns expected to get free media coverage of their sites and did press conferences to launch their sites, major coverage did not result. For this reason, the researcher decided not to include an analysis of these stories in the final results.

#### Reliability of Research

By using these three different data gathering techniques, the results were triangulated, an important part of both case study and qualitative research (Yin, 1994). Triangulation, as defined by Yin, involves the use of several different types of data. By

using multiple sources of data, converging lines of inquiry were developed for each research question, increasing the reliability of the results. Each different set of data provided insight into the intent of the communication by the campaigns, both from the campaigns and from independent observations. Additional reliability has been built into this study because two units of analysis, the Dole/Kemp Web site and the Clinton/Gore Web site were analyzed. Through comparison across two units of analysis, reliability was enhanced through multiple sources of data.

#### Time Period

The time period chosen for this study was the general election period of the 1996 presidential campaign. This is defined as the time period after the party conventions until election day (Stuckey, 1989; Watson, 1984). The researcher started data collection on September 1, 1996, the weekend immediately following the Democratic convention, and completed data collection on November 6, 1996, the day following the election.

This time period was chosen for two reasons. First, since the number of users of this communication medium continues to grow, this last time slot could be said to have the most potential for audience size. Second, this communication channel is a “pull” channel (Negroponte, 1995). This means that the candidates are not pushing the information out to their audience, as in television commercials. Voters are able to choose to view their information at their own pace, based on personal information needs and desires. If Popkin’s (1994) reasoning voter theory is correct, voters choose to utilize the smallest amount of information closest to the time they will use that information. Web pages may be the pull channel of choice for the voter who has access.



## Data Analysis

This study considered three research questions to understand how presidential candidates during the 1996 campaign used the World Wide Web to communicate to voters. The three questions were:

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news?

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters?

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters?

Defined typology. To analyze the data collected, the researcher developed a typology to understand what specific predicted patterns would support each of these research questions (Lindlof, 1995). As Lindlof originally defined the concept of typology, it is to classify aspects of a particular culture that is being researched. Although this research was not about a particular culture, it focused on how a specific type of people communicate. It could be argued that the communication that is done between a candidate and his voters is a subset of American culture. By using this typology based on existing theory in the field, the researcher searched for empirical patterns across the three different types of data collected for this research to match the predicted patterns.

For each research question, the researcher defined the following typology to analyze the data collected.

I. How are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news?

- An overview of the candidate's message, and what the campaign stands for.
- In-depth information on the candidates' position on issues.
- Daily updates of the Web page to encourage voters to return often to the page to find new information.

II. How are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters?

- Ability to download many different types of information about the candidate, quickly and easily.
- Information concerning a candidates' personal history and family, preferably in audio or video form to help establish personal characteristics.

III. How are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters?

- Ability for people to sign up to volunteer for the campaign on-line.
- Ability for people to donate to the campaign on-line.
- Ability for the Web site visitor to e-mail the campaign with comments or input and receive a response.
- Personal appearance schedule, so voters know where candidates will be in person.

Applying the typology. After defining the typology, the researcher analyzed the data by dividing it into data collected through campaign sources and data collected by independent sources. For each candidate, the researcher first analyzed the campaign sourced data by the defined typology. Then the researcher analyzed the data collected from independent sources by the same typology. Finally, for each candidate, these two analyses were compared to fully develop each candidate's approach. These first three stages of analysis are described in the next chapter.

Since this was a double case study, after each campaign was analyzed, the results were compared across the two candidates to add additional reliability. This final stage of analysis was compared back to the original research questions to gain insight and understanding of how Web sites can be used to communicate to voters during the general election process. This fourth stage of analysis is located in the Summary and Conclusions chapter. It was through this final analysis that the researcher was able to develop new theoretical directions for campaign communications and possible directions for future research.

## Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

### Overview

This study employed four different stages of analysis. Under the first stage of analysis, the data set for each campaign that was dependent on campaign sources was analyzed according to the typology defined. The second stage of analysis consisted of reviewing the data for each campaign collected from sources independent of the campaign against the predicted typology. The third stage of analysis compared these findings to determine whether the two sources of data corroborated the expected typology. The findings from these three stages of analysis are contained in this chapter.

In the following chapter, the fourth and final stage of analysis is found. In this final analysis the different campaigns' findings were compared back to the original research questions to understand if the empirical patterns of how the campaigns actually used their Web sites corresponded to the predicted typology. By utilizing the findings from two case studies, the reliability of the results are enhanced. In addition, in this final analysis, suggestions for future research are included.

### Overview of Clinton/Gore Web Site

The Clinton site started with a main screen which contained eight menu items. The menu items included Meeting America's Challenges, which discussed the seven themes Clinton delineated in his January 23, 1996 State of the Union address; The Briefing Room, which covered the issues of the campaign, including issue papers, information on

economic growth, a state by state record, press releases, and specific speeches; Downloadables, which included campaign buttons, screen savers, video clips and a grassroots action kit for getting involved in the campaign; The 21st Century Express, a detailed map that followed Clinton along on his train trip to the Democratic National Convention, including speeches given at each stop; Bill Clinton and Al Gore, that contained biographies of the candidates and their wives; About this Website, including frequently asked questions, a search engine, glossary and technical specifications for the site, and finally, Volunteer of the Week, which highlighted a volunteer from one of the offices. There was also a section on What You Can Do. This section included forms to fill out to volunteer for the campaign, contribute to the General Legal and Accounting Campaign fund (GELAC), sign up for the mailing list, and submit material for America's Home Page. The site was mainly text files, with some downloadable video, no RealAudio, and Shockwave soundfiles for the 21st Century Express cover page.

The site by the end of the campaign had grown exponentially. On election day, instead of going to the main menu, visitors were brought to a page which detailed a map of the United States, and encouraged them to click on a state to get current election results. By clicking on the state, the visitor was able to see the current reported returns for the presidential race for that state, as well as being able to link to the Clinton/Gore record for the state, and current activities. If the visitor wanted to go the main menu, a link was available.

At this point in the campaign, the main menu had been redesigned and there were seventeen menu items, as opposed to the original eight. In addition to the ones mentioned

above, the additional ones were: the Presidential Debates, the Electoral College Computer, America's Home Page, In Your State, Clinton/Gore Now, The Challenges Ahead, We the People, The CG'96 Channel, and Search this Website. Several existing items were moved to the main menu. These included Search This Web Site and America's Home Page. The new features were Clinton/Gore Now, which was a news feed from the candidates on the road, giving their latest location, photos and speeches, and Presidential Debates, which contained the transcripts from the debate, as well as an opportunity to e-mail the campaign with feedback and comments about the debate. A comment section was also set up. The Electoral College Computer was an interactive game that illustrated how the electoral college system works. By selecting states to be Clinton or Dole states, the computer demonstrated how many electoral votes it takes to win the general election. America's Home Page was a weekly newsletter from people who had stories about their interaction with the Clintons, or why they were voting for him. In Your State detailed specific effects that the Clinton administration has had on improving life in every state. The Challenges Ahead was a Shockwave feature which allowed streaming audio and video to run together. This researcher could never run this application, because Shockwave always crashed her operating system. In addition, although it was labeled Part 1, there was never a Part 2, and it remained the same throughout the election period. We the People was a pull up menu of many different demographic groups to bring up extensive information on what the Clinton administration had done in support of this group. It also linked newsletters and comments that people had submitted. Finally, the CG '96 Channel was another new technology that used BackWeb, a push technology that fed information

to your computer screen. The Clinton site used it to feed bumpersticker screen savers to your computer and send an alert when a new press release went up. Both of the new technologies, The Challenges Ahead and the CG '96 Channel, were available to Windows '95 users who were running either the latest version of the Netscape browser or Microsoft Explorer. People who were accessing the site through America Online, or other browsers were unable to access these features.

#### Data Supplied by Clinton/Gore Campaign

In this first stage of analysis, data provided by the Clinton/Gore campaign was reviewed. This data included two interviews with Adam Sohn, director of technology for the campaign, and documentation supplied by the campaign.

First interview. The director of technology for the campaign defined the goal of the Web site to bring people into the campaign for re-electing Bill Clinton and Al Gore. While he did not know who the audience would be for the site, he stated the campaign targeted Democrats, as well as the undecided swing vote. Sohn viewed the site as part of the message, but not as a persuasion tool that would win the election. He believed that it would be at least one or two election cycles before Web sites had much impact.

Sohn defined what would win the election for Bill Clinton and Al Gore would be voters being touched by the candidates. While the campaign predicted that its site would reach out to voters and involve them in the campaign, they were not expecting it to have much impact on the outcome.

Sohn defined voting as a gut reaction to information that voters receive during the campaign. He stated, "there is too much information out there, and there are two guys

always saying in a very convincing fashion completely opposite things. I think if we can create a Web site that gives folks who use this medium for information that sort of back up to make that gut decision . . . then we will have succeeded.”

Sohn defined the message strategy of the site to be the same as the campaign itself, around the seven issues that were the core structure of the 1996 State of the Union speech. These themes included families, education, economic security, crime and drugs, the environment, world leadership, and reinventing government. He stated that they looked at creating action steps on the site, to encourage people to get involved in these seven themes. These definitions of the Web site as one of the tools to get the candidate’s message out to voters, and the message strategy being the same as the campaign’s, showed how the Clinton/Gore site would give a visitor an overview of the campaign message and what Bill Clinton and Al Gore stand for.

Sohn stated that they would have a briefing room on the site, similar to the President’s White House site, which would contain position papers, press releases, speeches, and perhaps talking points. Sohn stated, “we refer to this as the section that shows you everything you’d like to find, expect to find, on a Web site.” Sohn was not sure whether they would include every single press release. This area of the site would supply the in-depth information that voters can use to understand Clinton’s stand on issues.

Sohn’s description of a Java ticker which would run with whatever current message they would like to deliver, and his statement that he hoped to get digital cameras and laptops in the field to capture live events to post on the Web site while they were



happening, demonstrated the campaign's commitment to have current, updated information available on a daily basis. Sohn commented that he would love to see the site used by visitors as an additional news source.

In addition to the briefing section and the seven issues from the State of the Union speech, Sohn described an economic news portion of the site. This section would allow visitors to pick what economic statistics they wanted to view. The site would also include state specific economic numbers. Sohn discussed that since Clinton was the incumbent, his name and story were more known than when he was running in 1992. However, the site would contain a section with biographical information, incorporating videos and audio, possibly including the Man from Hope video from the 1992 Democratic National Convention.

When asked how the campaign defined interactivity, Sohn stated that they wanted to involve people in the site through interactivity, although he asked the question, "how do you do it, and why?" The site would have a form to volunteer for the campaign, with a supporting database structure to distribute this information to state offices. State offices could then use this information for crowd building and getting additional volunteers for local events. The site would also contain downloadable files that create camera ready brochures to be used as talking points and e-mailed to your friends.

Sohn thought the section of the site that would be the most interactive was America's Home Page. The idea of this section was to get people to submit content to the campaign to post on the site demonstrating how Bill Clinton or Al Gore had helped them personally. Sohn did not want the site just to be position papers that people could

download, he stated that this campaign was about inclusion. America's Home Page would allow people to feel that they are a part of the site, and Sohn believed that getting people involved and making them a part of the larger challenge, is how the campaign defined interactivity.

The site would also contain more traditional interactivity, such as the electoral college simulator. This demonstrated to people how the electoral college will work. Sohn did not expect the campaign to do on-line chats, either on the site or through America Online or CompuServe. This was because of logistical issues such as staffing, scheduling of candidates, and the fact that they are limited to approximately 1,000 people watching with 10 people actually being able to ask questions.

The campaign was not planning on publishing the candidates' schedules for two reasons: First, the security issues of having people know in advance the location of candidates' visits; and second, the campaign did not want to focus on what areas candidates are visiting. The electoral college process means that the campaign focuses on certain states to win that vote, not the popular vote. They did plan on having an e-mail list, where people can sign up to be notified if the President comes to their state.

The site would not have an opposition research menu. He did think that they would do some response to attacks in national media, and use the Web site to answer attacks by the Dole/Kemp campaign. Sohn wanted to avoid doing anything that would be interpreted incorrectly by the folks on the Internet, or considered bad taste on the Web. He stressed the importance of following netiquette. Sohn stated, "we want to make sure

we're not offending people with anything more than our message, and then those people are not going to vote for us anyway."

All this data indicated that the intent of the campaign was to provide an overview of the campaign message, in-depth information on the issues, and daily updates to site to encourage repeat visitors. The campaign was planning on providing many different types of information, as well as information concerning Bill Clinton and Al Gore's personal history. The campaign did not believe that it needed to define its incumbent candidates as much as they did in the 1992 election. Finally, the site would provide a place for people to volunteer with the campaign. The America's Home Page would allow site visitors to participate as well, although there was no statement about whether people will get a response from the campaign. While the campaign does not plan to release the candidates' schedule on the site, they plan to have a sign up where you can be notified if the candidates are coming to your state.

Pre-general election materials. The Clinton campaign did not release much documentation concerning the Web site. Sohn stated that very little information was actually written, most decisions were made in group meetings. Of the documentation they did release, it was all dated before the general election period, and before the site was actually available on the Web.

The Web site was predicted to be an extremely effective organizing tool, where people can sign up to help re-elect the President. The site would demonstrate that the Administration is forward looking, and reach out to younger audiences. Visitors would learn about the President's record and vision for the future. The documentation predicted

that visitors would learn more from the page than from any thirty-second spot, and they would not have to leave their homes to do so.

The review of the documentation supported the predicted pattern that the site would have an overview of the campaign message and state what the campaign stands for. It also supported the expected pattern of providing in-depth information to the voters through its statements that visitors will learn more from the site than in a television commercial. The final predicted pattern the documentation supported is the site is expected to be able to recruit people to work on the campaign.

Second interview. Sohn stated that the campaign viewed the site as a great success, but “hard to figure out what that means because there is really no way to measure it.” He felt that the site aided in establishing a connection with the voters through the participation and positive e-mail that they got. He stated that he got positive reviews from users, even Dole supporters. The site got its first one million hits in 10 days; in the several weeks before the election, it was receiving on average 400,000 hits per day. The 24 hours of election day, midnight Monday to midnight Tuesday, it got 2.1 million hits. At the end of the campaign, Sohn did not view the site as a persuasion tool. He stated that there was not enough bandwidth, not enough people accessing the site. This time the campaign used it as a positive message tool to talk about its record, to talk about the president’s vision for the next four years. They did not do reflex and reactive targeting with the Web site as in other campaign communications, it was just a positive place where voters could come and learn about the campaign.

While the campaign focused on different messages at different times, the Web site was a reflection of the entirety of the campaign. Sohn stated, "I think we tried to make this a site where you could come and figure out what was going on in the campaign, who these guys were, what they stood for, what they were planning to do, and what had happened today."

Most of information on the site was used in other parts of the campaign. Some of the material was created for the Web site alone, including content such as Volunteer of the Week, America's Home Page, all the downloadable materials, and the electoral college computer. Sohn stated that most of the other content was from the campaign, and thus was an extension of the campaign strategy. The challenge for Sohn was how to take all this information and tie it together thematically. Sohn did not want the site to be a static list of position papers.

Sohn thought it was useful to navigate horizontally as well as vertically on the Web. Because of the volume of material on their Web site, Sohn thought it was helpful to visitors to be able to wander through the site to find the data pertinent to them. In this way, he stated, visitors could locate the information without always having to return to the main menu, and they could wander through the site, following the links that interested them.

Sohn stated that they updated the site because the nature of the medium is change. He thought they updated the site at least once a day. Sometimes the campaign would post two or three press releases in a day. They also had digital cameras out on the road or picked up photos from satellite feed, either video or stills, to post on the site. Once or

twice, they had photos of an event on the site as Clinton was shaking hands in the crowd. The state by state economic numbers got updated every couple of weeks. The press releases, speech transcripts, the photographs, and artwork were changing daily.

One area of the site that was supposed to change was The Challenges Ahead. The campaign had done a series of Shockwave audio and video streaming to create a multimedia presentation about different topics. Only the first part was posted to the site, none of the remaining series made it onto the site. Sohn was not aware of this, although he did state that there were technical issues for accessing the presentation due to the newness of the software running the multimedia.

Sohn thought the collection of data from people who wanted to volunteer for the campaign went well. He had no idea, however, whether that information was used by the state offices as planned. The downloading of the information from the main database to the state offices was not smooth, Sohn accredited this to both logistical problems and bringing the site up so close to the general election period.

Since the campaign did not have the site available until after the primaries, because of campaign finance regulations, fundraising could only be for GELAC. Sohn stated they raised \$10,000 through contributions on the site for this fund, while GELAC raised a total of two million dollars from all sources.

Sohn thought America's Home Page was very successful. Initially it was buried several stages down in the site, but during the relaunch, it was moved to the first page. This was due to feedback from visitors that they wanted easier access to the newsletter. The campaign received in excess of 1,000 submissions for the site. On the day of the

election, they put together a database of 180 different stories, changing it every six minutes to show the many different contributions. Sohn reiterated his statement from the initial interview that America's Home Page was a logical extension of how the Clinton and Gore campaign was, very inclusive.

Sohn stated that the last week there was less activity on the site because campaign staffing resources were pulled away to the field, and because of their decision a week before the election to carry the returns on the day of the election. On the Wednesday or Thursday before the election, Sohn stated that they decided on the interface, and then had to program it, which took a lot of resources. Sohn credited having the returns on the site as attracting the 2.1 million hits they had between midnight on Monday night and midnight on Tuesday night.

Summary of campaign supplied data. This first stage of analysis of data collected from the campaign concerning the content of the Web site, including two interviews and a small amount of documentation, supported the predicted patterns for the first two research questions. The third research question on interactivity was only partially supported. Empirical patterns emerged in the data that corroborated three of the defined patterns, however for the last predicted pattern, no matching pattern was found in the data.

For the first research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news, predicted patterns included: an overview of the candidate's message, and what the campaign stands for; in-depth information on the candidates' position on issues; and daily updates of the Web page to encourage voters to return often to the page to find new information.

Sohn's statements in both interviews that the campaign viewed the site as part of the campaign message, with the intent of the site as a place where voters could come to learn about the campaign and Bill Clinton and Al Gore's stands on issues, supported the first predicted pattern. Sohn's description of the Briefing section, the seven issues from the State of the Union address, the Economic News section supported the predicted pattern of in-depth information on issues. Sohn predicted that the site would change daily through having laptops and digital cameras in the field to capture events as they happened. In the second interview, he stated that at least the press releases, photographs of events and transcript of speeches changed daily. The campaign's revamp of the site was also used to encourage renewed interest in the site. All these point toward the Clinton/Gore campaign intending to encourage visitors to return to the site often.

The predicted patterns for the second research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters, were also supported by the campaign provided data. These predicted patterns included the ability to download many different types of information about the candidate, quickly and easily; and, information concerning the candidates' personal history and family, preferably in audio or video form, to help establish personal characteristics. Sohn's description of all the different types of information the campaign intended to include on the site, including the Briefing Room, the seven issues of the State of the Union address, the economic news, both nationwide and for individual states demonstrated support for the first predicted pattern. In the second interview, Sohn stated that the site was viewed as a reflection of the entire campaign, and because of the volume of material, it needed to be well



organized. Sohn's emphasis on the importance of the organization of information supported the predicted pattern of being able to find all this information easily. Sohn stated that the site would contain biographical information for the candidates, although it did not appear to be considered as crucial since as incumbents, Bill Clinton and Al Gore had strong name recognition.

The predicted patterns for the final research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters, were the least supported. While Sohn stated that they did have a volunteer sign up on-line, in the second interview he mentioned that he had no way to confirm whether that information was ever used by the state offices. He cited both logistical problems of downloading the information from the main server, and the lateness of the availability of their site as two reasons why people who signed up on-line to volunteer may not have been contacted by the campaign. The fact that the Clinton/Gore site was not available to the public during the primary meant that fundraising was also limited. While the site did raise money for GELAC, it was not a significant contributor.

Sohn stated that America's Home Page defined interactivity for the campaign. He spoke about inclusion, and participation in the campaign. These statements are partial support for the third predicted pattern, ability for the Web site visitor to e-mail the campaign with comments or input and receive a response. America's Home Page offered Web site visitors the opportunity to e-mail the campaign with stories of why they supported the President. In addition, Sohn stated that they would not do on-line chats due to limited reach.

The fourth predicted pattern, personal appearance schedules, so voters know where candidates will be in person, was also not corroborated by the data supplied by the campaign. Sohn stated they would not supply this information for two reasons, security and not wanting to emphasize what specific states Clinton was traveling to the most. Sohn thought they might release schedule information to the site as it was released to the wires, but he was not sure.

#### Independent Data for the Clinton/Gore Web Site

The second stage of analysis covered data collected that was independent of campaign sources. This data consisted of daily observations of the Clinton/Gore Web site. As stated in the Methods section above, print news stories were not included in the findings due to their lack of content for the predicted patterns.

Clinton/Gore Web site analysis. Overall, the Clinton/Gore Web site presented a very positive view of Bill Clinton and Al Gore's administration. Most of the information on the site detailed specific issues and how the administration had dealt with them. The only area where this was not true was in the For Immediate Release section. Press releases offered comparisons to Dole's policies, rebuttal to Dole's attacks on Clinton, and indictments of Dole's record. Aside from this, the site presented a positive accounting and issues development of Bill Clinton and Al Gore's record. It demonstrated the predicted pattern of providing an overview of the candidates' message and clearly detailing what they stood for.

The predicted pattern of in-depth information on the candidates' position on issues was supported by the following sections on the site: Meeting America's Challenges, The

Briefing Room, In Your State, and We the People. Meeting America's Challenges covered the seven topics; families, education, economic security, crime and drugs, environment, world leadership and reinventing government; from the 1996 State of the Union address. Clicking on each of these topics brought up a page detailing specific actions of Clinton administration. The Briefing Room contained by the end of the campaign 27 different briefing topics, national economic data, press releases, and a digital archive which included six different speeches. In Your State contained economic data for all 50 states. We The People covered actions and activities by the Clinton administration on specific ethnic and minority groups. At the end of the campaign, the site was an archive for all the documents that the campaign had released. It provided almost an overwhelming documentation of the campaign from the start of the research period.

The Presidential debate section was one example of the completeness of the site. For each debate, visitors could access a full transcript of the debate. For issues covered in the debate, there were links to background papers on the administration's position. In addition people e-mailed in their comments after each debate, and these comments were posted on the site as well. For people who had missed the debate, or wanted to gain more knowledge about the issues discussed, there was ample archival material to review.

While much of the content of the site did not change over the ten-week research period, there were sections of the site that changed almost daily. This supported the predicted pattern of daily updating the Web site to encourage voters to return often to find new information. The Briefing Room had constant change, especially the For Immediate Release section which posted at least one new press release daily, often there were more.

On November 6, the section contained 78 press releases for November and October. Press releases for September, August, July, and June were also available through their own separate links.

The other section that changed almost daily was Clinton/Gore Now. This section was created after the main revamp of the site, and with a mouse click, a visitor could go to the latest campaign event. The contents of this section varied, sometimes there were just pictures of the primary speakers, sometimes pictures and actual speech transcripts, sometimes RealAudio files where a visitor could listen to the speech from the event.

Other parts of the site changed weekly, including Volunteer of the Week and America's Home Page. While America's Home Page was archived on the site, Volunteer of the Week was not, so a visitor could always go back and see each issue of America's Home Page. The site underwent some major changes during the end of September. These included a redesign of the main menu, and adding additional menu items to the site. The new main menu included the previous eight menu items, plus The Electoral College Computer, Clinton/Gore Now, The Challenges Ahead, We the People and the CG'96 Channel. All of these changes demonstrated that the site supported the predicted pattern of change to encourage repeat visitors.

Many different types of information were available on the site. From the issue papers in Meeting Americas Challenges and The Briefing Room previously discussed, to the speech transcripts available in Clinton/Gore Now, to the position papers in We the People, the Clinton/Gore site had an enormous amount of information available. As the campaign progressed, most of this information was archived so that a visitor could go

back and review, for example, all the press releases. All this information was easily accessed and clearly labeled so a visitor to the site could review what is interesting without reviewing everything on the site. In particular, the visitor had the opportunity to see three different types of information, issue papers, speech transcripts, and press releases. While all these different types were written by the campaign staff, the visitor was able to see how the message was delivered differently to press, live audiences, and as in-depth issue papers. All this information clearly supports the predicted pattern of the site having many different types of information, easily accessible.

The section on Bill Clinton and Al Gore contained biographies of both candidates and their wives. It did not include either video or audio files of them telling their story in their own words. While this section allowed a visitor to gain rudimentary knowledge about the principals in the campaign, it did not allow much personal connection with them. The video clips available in the Downloadables section allowed more connection with Bill Clinton. The predicted pattern of having information about the candidates' personal history and family, preferably in audio or video form was only partially matched by data from the site. While information was available, it was not presented in a way to increase a voter's assessment of the personal characteristics between the candidate and visitors to the site.

The What You Can Do section matched the predicted patterns for volunteering for the campaign and donating to the campaign on-line. This section included four menu items, Volunteer for the Campaign, Join Citizens for Clinton/Gore 96, Campaign's Mailing List, and America's Home Page. To volunteer for the campaign, a visitor needed to fill

out an on-line form and submit it to the campaign. It was also possible to sign up for the campaign mailing list. To contribute to the campaign was less clear. Visitors had to choose the Join Citizens for Clinton/Gore 96 menu bar, then read through a page describing the Citizens "ON-LINE" for Clinton/Gore Committee, and how to contribute to the campaign. After this information was a form to fill out which could be printed and mailed in with a check or submitted on-line with a credit card. While the predicted pattern of being able to contribute to the campaign was supported, the place to do this was buried several layers down on the site, and may have not been obvious to the casual visitor to the site.

The next predicted pattern, ability for the Web site visitor to e-mail the campaign with comments or input and receive a response was partially supported. At the beginning of the research period it was not immediately clear how to e-mail the site with comments or input. By going to the What You Can Do, and clicking on America's Home Page, a visitor could bring up a form to submit anecdote, thought, story, or photograph to the campaign. While this was not an opportunity to ask questions of the candidates on-line, it was a place to submit information to the campaign. After the debates, visitors could e-mail in their comments about the debate, which were posted in the debate section of the site. There did not appear, however, any clear e-mail address to send the candidates questions with the possibility of receiving either an answer via e-mail or by a posting on the site. Therefore, the data provided by the review of the site only partially matched this predicted pattern.

The Web site had cues to where the President and other surrogates were, but did not specifically invite or encourage people to come and see the candidate in person. The 21st Century Express menu contained a map showing Clinton's train trip stops to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, but there were not specific details about the location and times. However, press releases were posted to the site that detailed his travel plans, for example a September 4, 1996 release that detailed travel plans September 10 through 12. Other times, these were not posted until after the event, such as the September 23 press release which carried all the information about national events for "Family and Medical Leave Day." This was very detailed, including places of where events would happen around the nation on September 24, but because it was not posted to the site until September 25, it provided background information only. While it was possible to glean information from the site of where the candidates were, it was not consistent enough to say that it supported the predicted pattern of a personal appearance schedule.

Summary of independent data collected. The Web site data matched the predicted patterns defined for the first two research questions, and partially supported the predicted patterns for the final research question. Through the extensive amount of information available on the site, visitors were able to understand the Clinton/Gore campaign's main messages and themes. The campaign also provided an overwhelming amount of in-depth information on the candidates' positions on issues. The final predicted pattern for the first research question was daily updates of the site to encourage visitors to return often to the site. The Briefing Room and Clinton/Gore Now section both matched this predicted

pattern by changing almost daily. Other sections of the site changed weekly, including America's Home Page and Volunteer of the Week. Finally, the design change at the end of September brought a new look to the site, and supported the predicted pattern of change.

For the second research question, the first predicted pattern of many different types of information was matched by observation of the site. The extensive amount of position papers, press releases, and speech transcripts gave the visitor the opportunity to view many different types of information. The opportunity to see these different presentations of material added additional insight to the understanding of the issues. The second predicted pattern of providing biographical information about the candidates in either audio or video form was only partially matched by data collected from the site. The text biographies provided the basic background information about the candidates and their wives, but the lack of audio or video format kept the visitor from hearing or seeing them tell their story in their own words.

The final research question predicted patterns of volunteering and donating to the campaign on-line were demonstrated by data on the site. To volunteer, a visitor filled out an on-line form under the Volunteer for the Campaign section in What You Can Do. To donate to the campaign required more effort by a site visitor. An on-line form was available under the Join Citizens for Clinton/Gore 96, which described signing up on-line as well as contributing. The predicted donation pattern was matched by this form, but it was difficult to locate.



The other predicted patterns for the final research question, ability to e-mail the campaign and receive a response, and candidate's schedule available to encourage voters to come see them in person, were only partially supported by data found on the site. Visitors could e-mail the Clinton/Gore site through the America's Home Page submission form. Although this form was to submit material for the newsletter, it could be used to submit comments to the site as well. There was no indication that a visitor would get any response. The site had cues to where the candidates were, but did not specifically encourage people to come and see the President at events. Both of these predicted patterns were partially supported in that the persistent and determined visitor could accomplish them, but the site was not set up to encourage either activity.

#### Clinton/Gore Web Site Summary

The third stage of analysis consisted of comparing the comparing the campaign supplied and independent observations of the site to the predicted typology to understand the empirical patterns emerging from the Clinton/Gore Web site. This triangulation of all three data points for the site improved reliability of the findings.

The Clinton/Gore Web site supported the three predicted patterns defined for the first research question of how are the candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by televisions news. These predicted patterns were (a) an overview of the candidates' message, and what the campaign stands for; (b) in-depth information on the candidates' position on issues; and (c) daily updates of the Web page to encourage voters to return often to the page to find new information. The campaign supplied data defining the site as an extension of the campaign message and

as a place where visitors could learn about the campaign, was supported by independent observation of the site. Through the extensive amount of information available on the site, visitors were able to learn about the main themes and messages of the campaign. The extensive amount of information described by Sohn for the Briefing section, the seven issues from the State of the Union address, and the Economic News section were all found on the site during the observation period. The amount of information was overwhelming to some extent, but it was still fairly easy to find the particular topics a visitor was interested in due to clear layout of the site and the availability of a search engine. All these findings supported the second predicted pattern of in-depth information on the candidates' position on issues.

Sohn's statements concerning changes on the site were supported by the independent data collected. Press releases and the Clinton/Gore Now section changed almost daily. Other sections of the site changed weekly, and the redesign of the site at the end of September kept the site fresh.

For the second research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters, the data strongly supported the first predicted pattern and partially supported the second. The first predicted pattern, ability to download many different types of information about the candidate quickly and easily, was both supported by the campaign supplied data and the independent observations of the site. The extensive amount of position papers, press releases, and speech transcripts, as well as the economic issues all supported this predicted pattern. Sohn's emphasis on being able to link to this information both horizontally and vertically,

was demonstrated on the site by reaching different parts of the site that discussed the same issue, without having to return to the main menu.

The second predicted pattern for the second research question, information concerning the candidates' personal history and family, preferably in audio or video form, to help establish personal characteristics, was only partially supported by the Clinton/Gore site. Sohn's statements that the site would contain biographical information was supported by the actual site. However, the information was only presented in text format, and did not help the visitor establish personal characteristics of the candidates.

The final research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters, was partially supported by the first two predicted patterns. The Clinton/Gore site did have volunteer and donation on-line forms on the site. However, the campaign supplied data demonstrated that the volunteer information may not have been used due to logistical problems and the date of bringing the site on-line. The donation amount was only a small portion of the total amount collected for GELAC. The independent observation of the difficulty of locating the donation form may have contributed to the small amount collected.

The final two predicted patterns for the last research question were also only partially supported. The campaign data indicated that America's Home Page was a place for visitors to e-mail the campaign, which was confirmed by independent observation. However, there was only partial support for this first predicted pattern of being able to e-mail the campaign and receive a response, since there was no response mechanism from

the campaign. In addition, the purpose of America's Home Page was to send in stories supporting the President, not a forum for exchange of ideas.

The last predicted pattern of the personal appearance schedule, so voters know where candidates will be in person, was not supported. The campaign specifically stated that they would not do this due to security reasons and not wanting to emphasize the states the campaign was specifically targeting. The actual site also did not support the predicted pattern, although some press releases did detail the candidates' or First Lady's schedule. To discover this information from the site required diligence, it was not something the campaign highlighted on the site.

#### Overview of Dole/Kemp Web Site.

Visitors to the Dole/Kemp Web site started at an introduction menu, welcoming them to the on-line campaign. If they had a Netscape 2.0 compatible browser, there was an option to customize the site. The Custom Design Form did not explain why site customization was beneficial. It required submitting the following information: first and last name, e-mail address, and state. Optional information included indicating whether Shockwave and RealAudio were installed as plug-ins, specific issues in which visitors were interested, sign up for coalitions, sign up for the electronic mailing list, and choices for animated footer graphic options.

The Dole/Kemp main menu contained six icons: About the Team, Dole Interactive, The Dole Agenda, Get Involved, On the Campaign Trail, and News Room. In addition, a sidebar, titled Today's Headlines, listed the day's date, top stories, and features. A text only menu was listed at the bottom of the page, with Homepage, Register, Volunteers,

Donations listed in larger type, and About the Team, Dole Interactive, The Dole Agenda, On the Campaign Trail, Get Involved in smaller type. These provided immediate links to specific points on the site.

About the Team included biographies of Bob Dole; Jack Kemp; Elizabeth Dole; a timeline detailing major achievements in Bob Dole's life; multimedia with RealAudio files of Bob and Elizabeth Dole; a photo album of Russell, Kansas; Bob and Elizabeth's family; and Leader Dole, a Web site for their dog. The Dole Interactive section contained buttons, wallpaper, and posters to create to show support for the Dole/Kemp campaign. Interactive games included a crossword puzzle and trivia quiz. The Send a Postcard allowed visitors to design a postcard and e-mail it to a friend, showing support for the Dole/Kemp team.

The Dole Agenda section included issue papers on 24 different topics, a position paper on what Bob Dole stands for, the Dole/Kemp economic plan, and an interactive map to review the Clinton record in specific states. For each issue paper, a rating system could be checked and e-mailed to the campaign on how important the issue was to the visitor. In addition, the issue papers had one link for the issue paper itself, plus links to other supporting documents for that issue on the site, including speeches, hot topics, and press releases.

The Get Involved icon had five different areas to link to: the Mailing List, to subscribe or unsubscribe for e-mail updates from the campaign; a List Archive, to review the e-mail messages sent by the campaign; Volunteers, to sign up on-line; Donations, to

contribute on-line; and Link to DFP Online, providing set up links to post on your own Web site to promote the Dole/Kemp site.

On the Campaign Trail had an interactive map where visitors could view the cities the campaign had visited. There was no information on how to go see Bob Dole or the dates that he was at any of these places. It was also unclear how often this section got updated.

The News Room had six different icons: Press releases; Speeches, a text archive of the major speeches from the campaign; Updates, an additional link to e-mail updates sent by the campaign; Commercials, which contained selected advertisements in text, RealAudio and QuickTime video; Hot Topics, which was brief overviews, attacks, and responses to Clinton; and the Multimedia section, which contained RealAudio files.

By the end of the campaign, the Dole/Kemp site had expanded, but not as exponentially as the Clinton/Gore site. On election day, visitors found a new cover page, with a text appeal to vote for Bob Dole. The introductory menu had added two new links, Follow Along on the 96 Hour Campaign Marathon, and Calculate Your Tax Cut with the Dole/Kemp Plan. The Victory Marathon Trail detailed the cities Bob Dole visited on his five-day trip before the election. It also had a map showing the trips. The Interactive Tax Calculator allowed visitors to input income, filing status (single or married) and dependent children and then calculated the resulting federal taxes under the Dole/Kemp tax cut plan. The main menu showed the same six icons, and the rotating Today's Headlines sidebar.

### Data Supplied by Dole/Kemp Campaign

In this first stage of analysis, data provided by the Dole/Kemp campaign was reviewed. This data included one interview with Jeff Meyers, director of information systems, one interview with Robert Arena, director of internet strategy for the campaign, and documentation supplied by the campaign.

First interview. The first interview with the Dole/Kemp campaign was with Jeff Meyers, director of information systems. Meyers stated several goals for the Web site: (a) to show that the Internet was important, (b) that the Dole/Kemp campaign's site on the Web was excellent, (c) to be a logical extension of the campaign, and (d) a way to visit the campaign electronically. Meyers viewed the site as place for people to learn about Bob Dole. These statements support the first predicted pattern of providing an overview of the candidate's message, and what the campaign stands for. Meyers discussed how much information was available and how important it was to include information pertinent to the campaign. He stated that the site was viewed as a way to get information to voters quicker than by traditional campaign methods. While these statements do not specifically match the predicted pattern of providing in-depth information on the candidate's position on issues, there was an indication that the site would be a way for visitors to access information about the Dole campaign.

Meyers stated that they encouraged people to come back to the site by changing graphics, incorporating new areas and new pages. He focused on the fact that keeping the site dynamic meant that people would be more likely to return to the site to find new

information. This matched the predicted pattern of daily updates on the site to encourage voters to return to find new information.

Meyers stated that the campaign viewed the site as a way to disseminate information about the Dole campaign. He emphasized that it was important to have a technologically successful site, so people could capture to screen or download the information that they wanted quickly and easily. All types of information were important from his view, the goal was to have a balanced site, including state information through an interactive map, press releases, speeches, and background information on Bob Dole. Meyers felt that one area that was important to include was the ability for people to download and view commercials on their desktop. He discussed the expansion of the distribution channel of the advertisement when the campaign made them available on the site. These statements matched the predicted pattern of having many different types of information available to download quickly and easily, as well as partially supporting the predicted pattern of having information about the candidate's background. Meyers did not state whether he viewed it as important to have this information in audio or video form.

While Meyers would not release how much money had been raised on the site during the primary period, he did state that he felt that part of the site had been successful. He also stated that they did have a volunteer and guest book sign up for the site which was also very successful. He felt that for the primary, if the Web site's goals were to win the primary, raise money, sign up volunteers, and act as an additional way for people to



interact with the campaign, they achieved all of that. These statements match the predicted patterns of being able to volunteer and contribute to the campaign on-line.

The predicted patterns of being able to e-mail the campaign with comments or input and receive a response were not demonstrated, nor was the predicted pattern of the candidate's personal appearance schedule. Meyers stated specifically that they did not have a comment line, although they did receive input through regular mail and calls to the campaign. Meyers' definition of interactivity on the site was using multimedia capabilities to promote the site. He detailed the screen savers, postcards, maps as ways to promote the site. None of these statements supported the predicted patterns.

Pre-general election materials. The Dole/Kemp campaign released a proposal written by Robert Arena, the second person interviewed for the campaign, after election day. Titled "A Blueprint for New Media," it covered the vision for the site, the expected audience, the image, and recommendations of content for the actual site. A complete report, it included an analysis of the competition, both Clinton and Perot, and clips from news publications, both on-line and mainstream media, commenting on the site.

The proposal defined the Internet as an unfiltered direct connection to the voter. Internet users were characterized as being more active and able to review specific information that interested them. By visiting the Dole site, visitors chose to participate in the campaign, demonstrating that the visitor was already open to the message being conveyed on the site. Internet users were categorized as educated, affluent, and attentive.

The main thrust of the Web site was defined to be "highly positive Pro-Dole Web site . . . . this site should be a single source for positive information coming out of the

campaign.” The vision of the site was stated as providing a message that persuades visitors that Bob Dole is the person they want in the White House. Having a good image on-line was defined as being relevant in content, current in technology, aggressive in marketing. The proposal stated that by using the immediacy and accuracy of new media, “we can telegraph the themes of a traditional campaign directly into the cutting edge of new technology - capturing an audience that listens.” These statements match the predicted pattern of providing an overview of the candidate’s message. This proposal’s focus on the technology aspect also supported the theme emerging in the initial interview with Meyers, that the use of the technology is what communicated the message that Bob Dole understood this new world.

A visitor to the site should be able to find all the supporting documentation to back up the decision to vote for Dole, the proposal stated. It discussed how television commercials can only communicate a message in thirty seconds, while the Web site offers an opportunity to “supplement the big picture ideas with background and additional information that can cover a subject with more depth and detail.” While issues were not mentioned specifically, the proposal demonstrated intent of providing in-depth information on issues.

The proposal listed constant updating as crucial to the success of the site. Citing the three-day lag of posting press releases to the primary campaign Dole site, the proposal stated, “on the Internet, an impression of a site left unattended is fatal.” These statements matched the predicted pattern of daily updates on the Web site to encourage voters to return often to find new information.

Content listed as important for the site included about the candidates and their spouses, issues, electronic mailing list, multimedia, what's going on in my state, how to get involved with the campaign, guest book, press office and media kit. In addition, the proposal specifically suggested carrying copies of the latest campaign commercials for viewing on-line, and screen savers and other multimedia to download so visitors could take the campaign with them. All these different types of information confirm the predicted pattern of site visitors being able to download many different types of information about the candidate. As stated in the proposal, "an Internet user self-selects what they will view." In addition, the reference to the background material on the candidates and their spouses matches the predicted pattern concerning making information available about a candidate's personal history and family. Citing the technology Shockwave, the proposal suggested producing a multimedia version of the Bob Dole story that visitors can view, demonstrating the predicted pattern of providing this information in audio or video form.

The next predicted pattern of volunteering for the campaign was matched by this documentation. By referring to the success of signing up over 4,000 volunteers from the primary site, the proposal also discussed having state office information, so people could get involved at the local level directly. Donating on-line was only mentioned briefly in the proposal. Stated in the Results/Conclusion section, it refers to money raised on-line during the primary. Since it was not a focus of the proposal, the predicted pattern of donating on-line can only be partially supported by this data.

The proposal cited press criticism of the primary site that there was not a feedback section or a Dole campaign e-mail address. Legal concerns were mentioned as to why this was not done on the primary site, and suggestions were made that now was the time to work them out to allow this to occur on the general election site. This section supported the predicted pattern of the Web site visitor being able to e-mail the campaign with comments or input. Receiving a response was not discussed, so the proposal did not confirm that part of the predicted pattern.

The final predicted pattern, personal appearance schedule, so voters know where candidates will be in person, was also matched by this campaign documentation. Under the heading of what's going on in my state, the proposal stated, "Promote Dole events in specific areas." It also suggested including state campaign headquarters information so site visitors could contact state offices directly; this indicated that the campaign planned on promoting local Dole events.

Second interview. The second interview with the Dole/Kemp campaign was conducted with Robert Arena, the director of internet strategy. Arena defined the site as more successful than he had originally thought. He stated that at the beginning of the campaign he felt that the Internet would not play a major role in this election, but at the end, he had changed his mind. He cited Bob Dole mentioning his Web site address at the debates, the fact that it was tool for voters to learn about and participate in the campaign, and the amount of traffic on the site. Arena stated that during the last three weeks of the campaign, the site was getting 500,000 hits a day. The last three days of the election, the site received approximately 1,000,000 hits per day.

Arena defined the primary goal of the site during the general election as differentiating the Dole/Kemp campaign from the Clinton/Gore campaign. He discussed how important it was to get across the message that Dole understood the Internet and its value, and was able to use this medium to provide information to voters. Arena viewed the site as a place for voters to review Dole's economic, tax cut, and crime plan. He saw it as a resource for voters to see what Dole said himself about these specific policy issues. These statements support the predicted pattern that the site was an overview of the Dole/Kemp message, and helped visitors understand what the campaign stood for.

Arena viewed the site as "acting as an unfiltered, direct connection to the voter." When Bob Dole announced his economic plan with the 15% tax cut, Arena stated, people could read a page-one story in the major dailies, which summarized and interpreted it for voters. During this election, they could go to Dole's Web site and read the plan in-depth. He stated, "A Web site has the potential and the capacity to truly delineate very, very specific positions on issues (where) . . . you can get a depth of information that you're never going to find in a TV ad or in a newspaper article." These statements match the predicted pattern of providing in-depth information on specific issues; in Dole's case it was his actual economic plan for the country.

Arena stated that the site was updated daily, but the campaign did not post every single press release. Specifically, they did not post one paragraph releases that were responses to Clinton attacks. Arena characterized those as inside the Beltway information that Internet users were not interested in and did not have the context to understand.

Press releases that had context and showed Dole's stand on issues were made available on the site.

The purpose of visitors registering for customized Web sites was twofold. First, when they returned to the site, new information that had been added to the site would be highlighted in the Today's News sidebar. Second, by knowing which issues visitors were interested in, the sidebar feature provided pointers to those issues on the site. Arena described this feature as setting a standard for Web sites through issue modeling. He stated, "The mission from our perspective was much more a function of helping them determine what it was that they wanted to see." He described the revamping of site in mid-September as a breakdown in the database, due to the volume of visitors to the site. These statements match the predicted pattern that the campaign was updating the site daily to encourage voters to return often to the site. The registration process specifically supported this predicted pattern, as it was designed to facilitate accessing that new information.

Arena defined the types of information that he saw as important on the site as the economic plan, the tax cut information, the crime plan, and Dole's stand on other issues in the campaign. He also stated that an important part of the site was visitors getting to know Bob Dole. He cited the Bob Dole story and the positive commercials as two types of information the campaign made available on the site as a way for people to discover the character of Bob Dole. Arena discussed how important it was to use technology that people could access. He stated that the majority of their users were accessing the site through America Online (AOL), a commercial internet service provider, through 14.4 and

28.8 kbps modems. He specified parts of the site where they could have used Shockwave, but chose not to, because many of their users would not be able to access it. All this data matches both predicted patterns of having many different types of information easily available, and having the candidate's personal history in audio or video form.

Arena characterized both the volunteering and fundraising functions of the site as very successful. While he did not release the total number of volunteers the campaign signed up during the general election period, he said over one-third of the total volunteers for the campaign signed up on the site. He said the site acted as a national clearinghouse for volunteers, and at the end of each week they would send the information to the state offices. While Arena did not have data on how many states actually used the information sent out, he said there were state campaign staff who were calling every week to make sure that they got the names, while other states' staff never called. He felt it depended on whether the person who was running the state campaign was knowledgeable about computers. On fundraising, Arena would not release final numbers, but he stated that the Web site paid for itself in fundraising. He felt that this was unexpected by the campaign, and was counting donations from both the primary and general election period. All this data matches the predicted patterns of using the site for recruiting volunteers and donations.

Arena stated that the response piece on the issue papers was not effective. He stated that they received between 500 and 1,000 responses for each issue paper, and that the people who responded usually rated that issue as very important. The campaign did not use that data at all. The predicted pattern of visitors being able to e-mail the campaign

with comments or input was only partially matched since this comment feature was available, but there was no response mechanism from the campaign, and the campaign did not use the information.

The final predicted pattern of the personal appearance schedule, so voters know where candidates will be in person was not supported by Arena's statements. He stated that they used their electronic mailing list to promote and crowd-build at specific events, and that he viewed that as successful, but that they did not use the Web site as a place to promote state specific campaign events.

Summary of data from campaign sources. For the first research question, data from both interviews and the proposal matched the first predicted pattern of providing an overview of the candidate's message and what the campaign stands for. One specific unpredicted empirical pattern emerged from all three sources of data. They stated that a message of the site was that Bob Dole understood and knew how to use this new technology. In addition, the other messages Arena mentioned in the final interview were differentiating Bob Dole from Bill Clinton, and detailing his economic, tax cut, and crime plans.

The second predicted pattern, in-depth information on the candidates' position on issues was matched by statements in both the proposal and the second interview. The proposal discussed how Web sites provide a forum for the background and additional information to back-up the ideas presented in advertisements. Arena's statements that at the Dole/Kemp Web site, visitors could read the actual economic and tax cut plan, while



the media would summarize it, demonstrated how the Dole campaign supported this predicted pattern by including in-depth information about these issues on the site.

The final predicted pattern, daily updates to the site to keep visitors returning was matched by data supplied from the campaign. Meyers, Arena, and the proposal all emphasized how important it was to post new information to the site to keep it interesting. The proposal discussed how delays in posting press releases during the primary should not be a problem for the general election period. Arena's description of site customization also supported this predicted pattern. Visitors registering for the Dole/Kemp site would be able to see what was new to the site since their last visit, as well as the issues they were interested in being featured. All this data supports the Dole/Kemp campaign's intention to update the site frequently.

For the second research question, the predicted pattern of being able to download many different types of information quickly and easily was supported by the data supplied by the campaign. Meyers focused on three areas, having many different types of information, being able to access it quickly, and the importance of having commercials available on the site to increase reach. The proposal also mentioned commercials. Arena emphasized the importance of Dole's stand on issues and the importance of using technology that visitors could access. All these statements support this predicted pattern. All the data supplied from the campaign also supported the predicted pattern of providing background information on the candidates' and their family in audio and video form. The proposal suggested producing a multimedia version of the Bob Dole story that visitors

could view, while Arena stated that the positive commercials posted to the site supplied multimedia versions of the history of Bob Dole.

For the final research question, data supplied from the campaign supported two of the four predicted patterns. Volunteering and fundraising on-line were important parts of the primary site, and this continued into the general election site. The proposal stated that 4,000 volunteers had signed up during the primary. Arena stated that over one third of the total volunteers for the campaign came from the site. In addition, he claimed that fundraising on-line had paid for the Web site. All of the data collected supported these two predicted patterns.

Neither of the second two predicted patterns were supported by the material supplied by the campaign. Meyers stated that they did not have an e-mail response area on the primary site, which the proposal for the general site criticized. The proposal recommended that a response line be built into the general election site. Arena stated that while they did provide a response form at the end of each of the issue papers, they did not use the information. All this data show how the Dole/Kemp site did not support the predicted pattern of being able to e-mail the campaign and receive a response.

In addition, the last predicted pattern of posting the candidate's personal appearance schedule was not supported by data collected from the campaign. While the proposal recommended promoting Dole events on the site, Arena stated that they only used the e-mail newsletter to promote and crowd build at specific events.

### Independent Data for the Dole/Kemp Web Site

The second stage of analysis covered data collected that was independent of campaign sources. This data consisted of daily observations of the Dole/Kemp Web site. As stated in the Methods section above, print news stories were not included in the findings due to their lack of content concerning predicted patterns defined for the research.

Dole/Kemp Web site. The Dole/Kemp Web site supported the first predicted pattern of providing an overview of the candidate's message, and what the campaign stands for with the menu item of Why Bob Dole under The Dole Agenda main menu item. This summary of Bob Dole's position detailed the three main themes that appear throughout the Web site: more opportunities, smaller government, and stronger and safer families. In addition, the commercials that were available on the site under the News Room main menu provided video, audio, or text support of this message.

The site provided in-depth information on Dole's position on issues in numerous areas. The Dole Agenda menu item provided three different areas that visitors could explore. These were Issues, Economic Plan, and State by State. Issues provided 24 different areas of interest. The balanced budget issue section, for example, contained an issue paper on the balanced budget issue, plus supplemental materials, including three speeches and five hot topic links at the beginning of the campaign. By the end of the campaign, the balanced budget area contained the same position paper, two press releases, eight speeches and six hot topics areas, plus a link to the Dole/Kemp Economic Plan. The Economic Plan contained an executive summary of the plan, plus supporting material. An

additional section on Dole's in-depth plan to combat drugs and violent crime was added to this section and supplied detailed issue papers. The State by State section showed a map of the country, where visitors could click on a particular state and read a summary paper on Clinton's record in the state and Dole's proposals for the state. Most of the briefs that supported an issue contained references to articles published by independent sources. All this material supported the predicted pattern of providing in-depth information on the candidate's position.

Press releases were updated sporadically, sometimes once a day, sometimes not for a week. Speeches were updated less frequently than press releases. New weekly e-mail updates were posted to the site about every two weeks. While the lists of press releases, speeches, and hot topics would show the dates they were released to the public, they were often posted to the site in sets, after their release date. One example of this was on September 15 where press releases and hot topics became unavailable, with a message that the information was being updated. The five days leading up to that no changes in these areas appeared on the site. By the 17th, sites were available again, with all the press releases and speeches for September to date up on the site.

The Dole/Kemp site did not go through any major redesign changes during the research period. Information was updated most frequently in the press release, speeches, and hot topics areas. Additional content added during the campaign included: Dole's plan to combat drugs and violent crime; Robin Dole's biography; Elizabeth's Dole cookie recipe; a form letter for business people to download to their computer to print out on their letterhead, sign and send to the campaign to support Dole; Presidential debates

section and Republican National Convention, including text of speeches and RealAudio sound files. On November 4, the site posted an interactive map on Dole's 96-hour marathon tour around the nation before election day. The site did not change daily, the general impression was new information was added to the site on approximately a weekly basis. This evidence suggests only partial support for the predicted pattern of daily updates to encourage voters to return often to the site to find new information.

The Dole site offered many different types of information about the campaign to the site visitor. The sections of About the Team, The Dole Agenda, and News Room provided different types of information about the candidates and families, their position on issues, and news from the campaign. As on the Clinton/Gore Web site, this information was in the form of position papers, press releases, speeches, and fact sheets. The Dole campaign also provided selected advertisements for visitors to either view, hear, or read depending on their bandwidth and inclination. Speeches were often presented in both text and audio format to allow the visitor to hear the speech as originally given. The Dole/Kemp site contained interactive puzzles as an opportunity to learn more about the candidates and encouraged visitors to explore different parts of the site. This included a crossword puzzle and trivia quiz under the Dole Interactive section. The site utilized more RealAudio format than the Clinton site, encouraging visitors to hear statements from the candidates or others in their own voices. The information on the site supported the predicted pattern of having many different types of information about the candidate accessible quickly and easily.

The About the Team section on the main menu supported the predicted pattern of having information concerning a candidates' personal history and family. At the end of the campaign, clicking on About the Team brought the site visitor to photographs of the Dole family and the Kemp family. By clicking on the Dole family, the visitor brought up a menu listing eight different sections to learn about Bob Dole and his family, including: The Bob Dole Story; Elizabeth Dole; Robin Dole; Multimedia; Timeline; Photo Album; Leader; and Russell, Kansas. By reviewing this information, presented in text, audio, and photographs, a visitor was able to establish personal characteristics of Bob Dole. While this section did not contain video of Bob Dole, it still supported the predicted pattern of visitors being able to gather information about personal history and family because of the depth of information presented.

The next two predicted patterns, ability for people to sign up to volunteer for the campaign on-line, and ability for people to donate to the campaign on-line were both supported by the Dole/Kemp site. On every page of the site the footer menu bar allowed visitors to click on either Volunteer or Donate to support the Dole/Kemp campaign. The donation page explained clearly how to make a contribution to the campaign. The visitor could either print out the form and mail it to the Dole campaign, or they could submit it on-line and the campaign would bill them. The volunteer registration form was also simple to use. Visitors filled in the requested information and checked boxes for activities in which they would like to participate. The Dole/Kemp site made it easy for visitors to participate in the campaign through donations and volunteering because of the links at the bottom of every page on the site.

There was no obvious spot on the Dole/Kemp site where visitors could e-mail a message to the candidates or receive a response. While the issue papers had a response form where visitors could rate the importance of the issue, it did not allow for comments. This was the only place on the site, besides the volunteer, donation, and customizing your site that the campaign had forms to fill out and send back to the campaign. The Dole/Kemp site did not support the predicted pattern of allowing the visitor to e-mail the campaign with comments or input and receive a response.

The final predicted pattern, personal appearance schedule, was not supported by the Dole/Kemp Web site. While the site did show the cities and states that the campaign visited, it did not list dates, and it was actually unclear whether this part of the site changed during the ten-week research period. The 96-hour victory marathon trail was another opportunity for the Dole/Kemp site to provide this information. While the tour started on Friday, November 1, the information was not posted on the site until November 4. A detailed list of state offices and phone numbers to contact was available on the site, so visitors who wanted to get more information could contact their state campaign office to determine the candidates' appearance schedule. However, the site did not encourage visitors to come see the candidates in person, and therefore did not support this predicted pattern.

Summary of independent data collection. For the first research question, the Dole/Kemp site supported the predicted pattern of providing an overview of the campaign message through the Why Bob Dole section and the commercials. The site also supported the predicted pattern of providing in-depth information on the issues through the extensive

coverage of Dole's Economic, Tax Cut, and Combat Drugs and Crime plans. In addition, it also contained in-depth information on 24 different issues. The State by State area provided an additional area of in-depth information. Most of the papers that supported issues contained references to independent sources that visitors to the site could research if they wanted more background.

The Dole/Kemp site did not completely support the predicted pattern of changing daily to encourage visitors to return often to the site. New press releases tended to be posted in batches, with the time period of September 10 through 17 having no changes at all. New information was added to the site, such as the Presidential debate section, and an interactive map during Dole's 96-hour marathon tour right before election day. Overall, the site changed on a weekly basis, providing weak support for this predicted pattern.

For the second research question, the Dole/Kemp site supported both predicted patterns. The site offered many different types of information about the campaign, including The Dole Agenda, News Room sections, and About the Team. Advertisements were available for reading, listening to, or watching. Speeches were often posted to the site in RealAudio so visitor could listen to the speech, as well as read the text. Interactive puzzles allowed visitors to learn about Bob Dole and his background. About the Team presented a lot of information on both the Doles' and Kemps' background. This information was presented in text, audio, and photographs, allowing visitors to establish personal characteristics of the candidates. All these areas supported the second predicted pattern of having the candidates' personal history available on the site in audio or video form.



For the final research question, the Dole/Kemp site supported the first two predicted patterns of volunteering and donating on-line to the campaign. On every page of the site, the footer menu carried links to sign up to volunteer or donate. It was easy to find and clear how to use the forms.

The site did not support the final two predicted patterns of being able to e-mail the campaign and receive a response, or listing the candidates' personal appearance schedule. While the issue papers did have a response form, there was no space to list individual comments, only rate the issue from one to 10. The site did show the cities and states that the campaign visited, but did not include dates. It was also unclear whether this information was updated.

#### Dole/Kemp Web Site Summary

The third stage of analysis consisted of comparing the campaign supplied data and independent observations of the site to the predicted typology to understand the empirical patterns emerging from the Dole/Kemp Web site. This triangulation of all three data points for the site improved reliability of the findings.

The Dole/Kemp Web site supported the first two predicted patterns for the first research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news. Both the campaign data and independent observations confirmed that the site provided an overview of the campaign's message, and what it stood for. The campaign data stated that one of the most important messages of the site was that Bob Dole was aware of this technology and knew how to use it. The in-depth information on the site about Bob Dole's economic, tax cut and

prevent crime and drug plans supported the second predicted pattern of in-depth information on the candidates' position on issues. This information was confirmed by the campaign data as well.

The third predicted pattern, daily updates to the Web site to encourage voters to return to find new information, was only partially supported by the data collected. While the campaign supplied data indicated the importance of keeping the site fresh, the independent observations supported a pattern of weekly changes as opposed to daily ones. The period of time from September 10 to 17 where there were no changes was caused by software problems, not by any desire on the part of the campaign not to update frequently.

For the second research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters, the Dole/Kemp site supported both predicted patterns. The first predicted pattern of being able to download many different types of information quickly and easily was supported by both the campaign supplied data and site observations. The campaign voiced concerns about designing the site so that the majority of people could access it. The second predicted pattern of providing information on a candidates' personal history and family, preferably in audio or video format, was also supported by both the campaign data and observation of the site.

The final research question, how are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters, was partially supported. The first two predicted patterns of being able to volunteer and donate on-line were supported by the Dole/Kemp site. The ease of finding where to volunteer and donate on the site, was

supported by the results achieved by the campaign. Over one-third of all volunteers came from the site, and donations covered the cost of the site.

The second two predicted patterns for this question were not supported. While the site did have a place to e-mail the campaign with ratings on the issue papers, the campaign's statements that they did not use this data demonstrated lack of support for the first predicted pattern. The predicted pattern of posting the candidates' personal appearance schedule was also not supported either by campaign data or by independent observations of the site.

## Chapter V

### Summary and Conclusions

#### Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand how the 1996 Democratic and Republican presidential candidates used the World Wide Web during the general election to communicate to voters. It asked three research questions:

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news?

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters?

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters?

To answer these questions, the researcher defined a typology with predicted patterns for each of the research questions. Then data supplied by the campaigns and from direct observation of each site were analyzed to understand what the campaigns intended to accomplish, and what independent observation indicated they accomplished with the sites. These three stages of analysis were discussed in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, the final and fourth stage of analysis is discussed. This analysis consisted of comparing the two different campaign Web sites back to the original research questions. Empirical patterns that emerged that were not predicted by the typology are also discussed.

## Conclusions

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to get their message directly to voters, and avoiding mediation by television news? Research on television news coverage of political campaigns concluded that in previous elections, political reporting emphasized the horse race and the strategy aspects of the campaign (Kerbel, 1994; Marshall, 1983; Mickelson, 1989; Robinson & Sheehan, 1983; Rosenstiel, 1993). The coverage focus on strategy aspects of campaigns, researchers concluded, resulted in cynical coverage (Kerbel, 1994; Rosenstiel, 1993). In addition, the speed of coverage demanded by television allows little time for reflection or thoughtful analysis (Linsky, 1983; Gronbeck, 1990; Rosenstiel, 1993). This study predicted that the use of this new communication medium, the World Wide Web, would aid the 1996 presidential candidates in getting their message directly to voters, and avoid the cynical and horse race coverage of television news. The medium of the Web was also predicted to provide in-depth information during the entire campaign to allow voters to develop their own opinions about the candidates.

This study demonstrated that both candidates were effective in using their Web sites to avoid mediation. Voters who visited the sites had ample material to review and determine what the campaigns stood for. Both candidates supplied numerous position papers on specific issues that they defined as important to communicate to voters. Neither site contained information on the horse race aspect of the campaign, focusing instead on the issues.

As the campaign progressed, materials on both sites were updated at least weekly, sometimes daily, to allow visitors access to new information on issues. The archival

nature of the Web also allowed visitors to review old material if they wanted to revisit specific issues. This was effective in allowing voters access to both current and background information at any point during the campaign, increasing voters' ability to analyze the complex issues of the campaign over extended periods of time. Both campaigns demonstrated this archival pattern. While the Clinton/Gore site provided more material, the Dole/Kemp campaign still provided ample documentation during the general election period to support this pattern.

The Dole/Kemp campaign's opportunity to explain in great detail its proposed economic plan, tax cuts, and its approach to fighting the battle against crime and drugs was unprecedented. The Web site was able to supplement traditional television news coverage by providing in-depth descriptions of these plans. This allowed voters to read and analyze what the Dole/Kemp campaign proposed, without the mediation of strategy coverage. Voters could focus on how these plans might solve problems, instead of why the Dole/Kemp campaign would propose them. The Web provided an excellent medium for the campaign to avoid this type of mediation by television news.

The Clinton/Gore site acted similar to a news source by providing speech transcripts and photos of events from the campaign trail on almost a daily basis. While traditional media coverage might only include a short phrase or soundbite of Clinton's daily campaign speech on the news, visitors to the Clinton/Gore Web site had an opportunity to read, or perhaps listen to, the entire speech. This direct communication of actual speeches demonstrated how the Clinton/Gore Web site was used to avoid the

analysis of traditional television coverage. Visitors to the site were able to draw their own conclusions about the content of these speeches and to focus on what Clinton said.

The Dole/Kemp site did not support this conclusion of becoming its own news source since it did not do as many daily updates to the site. The campaign also did not post as much material to the site, instead selecting information that supported and was in context with the Dole/Kemp message. This may have created a site that was less overwhelming to voters. By posting the material that strengthened the campaign's message, the site acted less as an unfiltered news source. However, in-depth information about the issues was provided.

All this data shows that both candidates were able to communicate in-depth issue information to voters who visited their sites. Continuing the trend from the 1992 election, both candidates provided more information to voters who had access to this new communication medium. Through these sites, voters were able to read information over the entire period of the general election, having the time to analyze the complex issues of the 1996 presidential campaign. Both campaigns ignored the horse race aspect of the election, using the sites to explain what they hoped to accomplish for the country over the next four years. These Web sites demonstrated that this new communication technology could be effective in communicating candidates' messages directly to voters.

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to make different types of information available to voters? Popkin's (1994) reasoning voter model suggested that voters do not want to spend the time to become fully informed on every issue. They pick issues that have relevance to their lives, both on a daily basis and over the long term.

Klapp's (1978) and Graber's (1988) schema theory addressed the idea of information overload, and how people manage the flow of information by constructing categories. New information is fit into these categories, aiding in decision-making. This study predicted that candidates would use their Web sites to make information available about many different issues that were relevant to the 1996 election. It also predicted that the sites would provide this information so voters could locate what they were interested in quickly and easily.

The empirical patterns found for this study supported these predictions for the sites. Both the Clinton/Gore and Dole/Kemp Web sites provided many different types of information for voters. Both carried information on numerous issues and presented it in different forms: text, audio, and video. In addition, the information was shown as press releases, speeches, and issue papers, which allowed visitors to see how the campaigns presented the information to different audiences. For both campaigns, this predicted pattern was demonstrated empirically by data in this study.

The sites were also clearly laid out, and information was easy to find. The Dole/Kemp campaign focused on making the contents of its site easier to access for all users by utilizing technology that was widely available. The Clinton/Gore site included some new technologies that were not able to be accessed by all users or may not have worked at all. This may have discouraged some voters from returning to the site due to frustration with access. Both sites, however, did present successfully many different types of information about the issues and their candidates.



Graber's (1988) study suggested that voters are interested in personal characteristics of candidates to make judgments about character. This study predicted that the candidates would provide information about themselves on the sites. The data collected empirically supported this pattern for the Dole/Kemp campaign and less strongly for the Clinton/Gore campaign.

One area where the Dole/Kemp campaign presented better information was the section on the candidates' personal history and family. The Dole/Kemp site provided extensive backgrounds on both the Doles and the Kemps. The site incorporated audio, still photos, and some commercials to let visitors get to know Bob Dole, his history, and his family. The Clinton/Gore site only provided standard text biographies, giving visitors little chance to hear the candidates' background in their own words. The data collected indicated that this was because Bill Clinton was the incumbent. As president of the nation for the past four years, the campaign felt that voters had a chance to assess his character. Bob Dole, as the challenger, was less well known, and needed to have more detailed information allowing voters to understand his background.

One empirical pattern that emerged during data collection that previous research did not predict was the Dole/Kemp campaign's approach of using the medium of the Web to communicate a message to voters. All the data collected from the campaign indicated that the campaign believed that the site alone would convince voters that Bob Dole and Jack Kemp understood this technology and its implications, broadening their appeal to the voters who use this medium. This pattern was not demonstrated by the Clinton/Gore

campaign, who used their site to augment other communication functions, and provide an overview of the entire campaign.

All the data collected supported the conclusion that both candidates did provide many different types of information on their sites for voters to access. By allowing voters to review the specific information they found interesting, candidates' Web sites supported this research question. Through the many different types of information made available, the Web sites demonstrated that this new communication medium could be used effectively for this purpose.

How are candidates using the World Wide Web to increase interactivity between themselves and voters? Grunig's (1982) situational theory suggests that as voters raise their level of involvement with campaigns, they are more likely to become active and go to the polls and vote. Through this new media technology, the 1996 presidential candidates had an opportunity to interact with voters in very different ways from those of traditional campaigns. By incorporating interactivity in their Web sites, an option not available through television, candidates had an opportunity to increase voter activity.

The data collected suggested that the campaigns did not use this technology in new ways to encourage interaction between themselves and voters. Traditional methods of involving voters in campaigns are by inviting them to volunteer and donate money to the campaign. This was done by both campaigns on their Web sites. The Dole/Kemp campaign was more successful in this than the Clinton/Gore campaign for a number of reasons. Its experience through the primary season demonstrated that the sites could be used effectively for these purposes. For the general election campaign, donation and

volunteer forms were a mouse click away from every page on the site. The forms were easy to locate and to fill out. In addition, data indicated that the transfer of this information from the national office to the state offices went smoothly.

The Clinton/Gore site, while supporting this finding by having forms, was not as successful in implementation. The data collected suggested that this may have been due to difficulty of finding the forms on the site, the site was only available during the general election period, and technical or logistical problems in transferring the volunteer information from the national to state offices.

These two types of involving people in campaigns do not include a two-way symmetrical mode of communication as defined by J. Gruning and Hunt (1984). These types of involvement benefit the campaign in aiding them to fund and staff their campaigns, and do not support a two-way flow of information. While they may raise involvement, and lower constraint recognition of voters, increasing the likelihood that they will vote, campaigns did not use the sites to interact with voters in a two-way symmetrical mode. The campaigns stayed within the two-way asymmetrical mode of communication by involving voters in ways that would benefit the campaign only.

None of the data collected suggested that the campaigns used their sites to increase the interaction between the candidates and the voters using two-way symmetrical communication practices. While political communication research suggested that communication between candidates and voters is a process of negotiation (Diamond et al., 1993; Gronbeck, 1990; Stuckey, 1989), neither candidates' Web sites supported that conclusion. The Clinton/Gore site's America's Home Page was the only example of

using this new communication medium to involve voters in the campaign in new ways.

The data collected indicated that this section was about inclusion and participation in the process, not about increasing the interaction between Bill Clinton and Al Gore and the visitors to their site. While inclusion and participation in the campaign process are important, they do not demonstrate two-way symmetrical communication practices.

One empirical pattern that emerged during the collection of campaign data was different definitions of interactivity. The Dole/Kemp campaign data suggested that they defined interactivity by having areas on their Web site that visitors could either create something or learn with, as opposed to the traditional passive reception of messages from television. This definition resulted in activities on the Dole/Kemp Web site that encouraged visitors to create buttons, posters, play trivia games, and calculate their tax cut. While these type of interactive games encouraged visitors to learn about the candidates, they did not include any exchange of information. The Clinton/Gore campaign spoke of inclusion and participation in the campaign, citing its America's Home Page as an example of what they considered to be interactivity. The campaign also included what it considered traditional interactivity for Web sites as the Dole/Kemp campaign did, including screen savers and an Electoral College Computer. These definitions of interactivity, however, do not support the idea of J. Gruning and Hunt's (1984) model of two-way symmetrical communication practices.

Popkin (1994) suggested that voters need the interaction of live campaign events to feel personally connected to the campaigns. Neither of the sites encouraged voters to attend actual campaign events in their area. While the campaigns may have e-mailed

specific volunteers to crowd build at events, they did not offer the casual site visitor an opportunity to see the candidates or surrogates live at specific events.

The data collected indicated that campaigns did not use their sites as ways to increase interactivity between the candidates and the voters. With the exception of America's Home Page, the sites supported traditional methods of involving voters in campaigns, by volunteering and donations. While America's Home Page may have encouraged voters to participate in the campaign in a new way, it did not support two-way symmetrical communication practices.

#### Contributions to Theory and Practice

This study suggested a normative theory for how presidential candidates could use the medium of the World Wide Web to increase interaction between themselves and voters. It provided a theoretical framework for future political campaigns to understand possible uses of the World Wide Web and suggested how campaigns could increase voter involvement in the campaigns, perhaps resulting in higher voter turnout. The results showed that campaigns did not go beyond traditional communication practices for involving voters in campaigns, but demonstrated that this new medium could be used for increasing the amount of in-depth information available to voters.

It also advanced the body of knowledge in public relations by combining Grunig's (1982) situational theory and Dozier et al.'s (1995) mixed motive model of public relations in an application to a new medium for political communication. While these theories suggested that campaigns could use this new communication medium to increase interaction between themselves and voters, the data did not support this conclusion.

As the first presidential election cycle to use this new technology, this study provided insight into how it was used by the 1996 presidential campaigns. Through a better understanding of how this medium can help overcome existing problems in communication technology, candidates can raise voter involvement and aid in increasing voters' perception that their vote does have an effect.

#### Limitations of Research

This qualitative case study was designed to analyze four different types of data, two originating from campaign sources, and two collected independently. During the course of data collection, there were four areas where data collection did not go as defined and therefore may be considered limitations in this research. These included collection of traditional and on-line print media data, the first Doie/Kemp campaign interview, collection of Clinton/Gore campaign documentation, and Internet connection problems.

One key strength of the case study method for qualitative research is its reliance on multiple methods of data collection to improve the validity of the conclusions (Yin, 1994). While this study initially proposed to analyze four different sources of data, two of which were from sources independent from the campaign, data from traditional and on-line print media were not included in the results. By omitting this independent source of data, the case study is weakened through the removal of a converging line of inquiry, which strengthens the final conclusion. However, the reasoning behind omitting the data analysis from this source focused on the lack of predicted patterns found in both traditional and on-line print media. As stated above, news stories focused less on actual content of the

presidential candidates' Web sites, and more on what different sites were available for campaign information. Since there was very little coverage of content on the site, support for the defined predicted patterns did not emerge. One article did cover content, and provide additional data, but the researcher concluded that one article was not enough material to use as a data source (Plotnikoff, 1996). Thus, although this data source was omitted from the final analysis, it was because of lack of contribution to the findings. The remaining sources of data, two from the campaign, and one from independent observations provided enough evidence to determine a converging line of inquiry.

A second limitation to this study was the first interview with the Dole/Kemp campaign. This interview took place with Jeff Meyers, who did not work on the general election campaign Web site. Meyers was involved with the primary campaign Web site design and maintenance only. The researcher chose to include these results because they were supported in both the extensive proposal for the general election site and by the second interview with the campaign. Through the analysis of all the material received from campaign sources, the general strategy for the site did not appear to change. Much of what was done on the primary site was included in the general site, although specific items were improved. Since the purpose of conducting two interviews was to observe changes in strategy over time, this interview fulfilled its purpose of understanding the Dole/Kemp campaign strategy for its site over an extended period of time.

The third limitation concerned collection of campaign documentation for the Clinton/Gore Web site. Political campaigns tend to work under very demanding conditions. As indicated by comments from both campaigns, staffers were working on

various projects for the campaign, not just Web site management. For the Clinton/Gore campaign, this resulted in very little written documentation. Unlike the Dole/Kemp campaign which produced an initial proposal, Sohn stated that most of the communications that took place concerning the set-up of the Web site were verbal. Several memos were released that did contribute to the predicted pattern-matching for campaign-contributed data. During the second interview, Sohn stated that he was preparing a summary of the Web site at the end of the campaign. After the election, campaigns disband quickly, and are focused on closing down the campaign operation. Despite numerous calls to Sohn during the final days of operation, the researcher was unable to reach him to confirm whether a summary was completed. Access to this summary would have increased the internal validity of the campaign-sourced data.

The final limitation to this study took place during the daily download of new material from the sites themselves. At one point in the campaign, three days in a row were not collected due to problems connecting to the Internet. The specific three days were Friday, September 6, Saturday, September 7, and Sunday, September 8. This did not have impact on the quality of data collected from the sites because the sites acted as archives of the campaign. Most new material posted remained on the site, so visitors could access it at any point in the campaign. The Clinton/Gore site had a section called Clinton/Gore Now that usually changed daily, this was one area where the information was not archived. For this three-day period, data that was updated daily may have been lost. In the analysis, this daily change contributed to support of one predicted pattern, so this loss of data may have had an effect on the quality of the conclusions. However, since the main



purpose of the daily collection was to understand how frequently the campaigns were updating their sites, the ten-week research period did provide ample data.

While there were specific problems with various aspects of data collected during the course of the research period, the overall quality of the research did not suffer. This was due to the many different sources of data collection and amount collected from the independent observations of the sites themselves. In addition, the design of the case study incorporating two approaches increased the reliability of the conclusions reached.

#### Directions for Future Research

This qualitative case study demonstrated that 1996 Democratic and Republican party candidates used the World Wide Web to communicate to voters. The Web sites did offer the campaigns an opportunity to avoid the mediation of traditional media, specifically television. By offering more in-depth and different types of information on their sites, they were able to communicate information that voters need to make voting decisions. As the reach of this new technology grows, this finding may have more impact on the election process. Since this was the first election cycle with this new technology, it was difficult to conclude that it actually had much impact on the final results of the campaign.

There were two empirical patterns that emerged during data collection that indicate possible directions for future research. The first was the Clinton/Gore Web site becoming its own news source by posting daily updates to the site describing campaign activities. This can be considered a news source function, carrying the content of an actual speech in its entirety on the Web site. This possible broadening of the news source definition raises interesting questions about the credibility of the source of the information.

As a pull medium as defined by Negroponte (1995), the Web allows individuals to gather information from many different sources besides the traditional mass media. By understanding whether candidates are developing credibility under traditional news organization models, researchers could gain additional insight into the new communication medium of the World Wide Web.

A second empirical pattern that emerged under the second research question is the Dole/Kemp campaign suggesting that the Web site itself was a message to voters. The campaign focused on the importance of having a site to demonstrate that Bob Dole and Jack Kemp were aware of this new technology and were able to use it effectively during their campaign. This idea of the medium communicating a message to voters that Bob Dole is current with technology trends was not explored in this case study.

Finally, this research concluded that the campaigns did not use their sites to increase interaction between voters and candidates under the mixed motive model of communication (Dozier et al., 1994). While they used their sites under the two-way asymmetrical model to increase interactivity through donations and volunteerism, they did not incorporate two-way symmetrical forms of communication. In addition, they did not aid voters in seeing the candidates or surrogates in person.

These conclusions suggest that another direction of future research is why the campaigns do not practice the two-way symmetrical communication model. An additional question might be, why do campaigns not encourage voters to come and see the candidates in person? This study suggested that some answers to these questions may involve logistical and security issues, and limits of this new media technology. As the

reach of this new communication media grows, campaigns may be able to resolve some of these problems and incorporate new interactive communication techniques into their campaigns.

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## **Appendix Interview Protocols**

### **First Interview**

**How is the content of the Web site decided? What types of information does the respective campaign view as important to include in the Web site? Was research conducted to help decide the content of the site? If so, how was this research conducted? How is the Web site content coordinated with other types of campaign communications?**

**Does the campaign view the national media as an audience for their respective Web site? Do they put information on the Web site that is not made available to the national media? Are responses to attacks in the national media included in the site?**

**What are the defined goals and objectives for the Web site? Does the campaign hope to reach undecided voters with the Web site, or only voters who have already decided to vote for their respective candidate? Is any research being done to understand what voters are accessing the site?**

**What role does interactivity play in the design of the Web site? How does the campaign define interactivity with visitors to the site? What systems are set up to respond to requests from visitors to the site?**

### **Second Interview**

**What is your overall assessment of the success of the site? What do you view as possible improvements?**

**How would you measure your original goals and objectives for the site against what you actually achieved?**

**What was the total budget for the site, both development and maintenance?**

**Did you track daily traffic on the site? What times were there specific spikes in the traffic? What was your total number of visitors during the general election period?**

**Did you track traffic on specific pages within the site? If so, what pages were the most visited? Did you revamp your site to accommodate those interests?**

**How much money did you raise through your site? Volunteers? What your were your sign up numbers for the e-mail newsletter?**



**How frequently did you update the site? Was there specific reasoning behind this decision?**

**How much information were you able to gather about the visitors to your site?**

**Did the campaign develop specific content for the Web site, or only use information that was generated for other uses within the campaign?**

**Did you consider the issue of credibility for the site, since the site was your own news service?**

**How did you promote your Web site?**